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AMERICAN AND BRITISH LABOUR

WHILE the Labour movement in Britain is fighting its defensive political battle to preserve the Welfare State which it has built since 1945, American Labour has launched an offensive in the industrial field. Mr. John L. Lewis ordered a stoppage in the coalmines in order to obtain an increase in the owners' contribution to the miners' welfare fund; and Mr. Philip Murray has brought all the steel workers out on strike in an effort to enforce on Mr. Benjamin Fairless and his colleagues the findings of Mr. Truman's mediator. The mediator turned down the union's claim for higher wages, but accepted the principle that industry should be made responsible for social security. He recommended that the steel magnates should contribute on each hour's pay 6 cents towards non-contributory pensions, and 4 cents towards other forms of social security, although it is calculated that this would raise the price of steel by three dollars a ton. A similar claim, put forward by the Auto Workers, has been conceded by Ford without a strike.

American Labour, schooled in the Gompers tradition, has always shown a natural preference for industrial as against political action. This preference has been strengthened by recent events on Capitol Hill. Largely instrumental in securing Mr. Truman's re-election on the Fair Deal programme, Labour has seen the detested Taft-Hartley Act retained by a coalition of Republicans and reactionary Democrats, and the postponement of "socialised medicine" on the British model. Nor has it much immediate prospect of achieving all-in Federal social security as promised in the Fair Deal. Faced with this political defeat in Congress, and realising that each round of wage increases is rapidly swallowed up by increased prices, the Unions have turned their attention to social security, and decided to make big business pay for it directly out of its own earnings.

It is high time that British Socialists realised how closely their own struggle is linked with that of the American Trade Unions. On the other side of the Atlantic this realisation is already widespread among American Labour leaders and Fair Deal politicians. They appreciate that the British experiment is the testing ground for a future American planned economy and Welfare State. If the Labour Government were defeated in the next election, the chances of the Fair Dealers in the mid-term campaign of 1950 and of Mr. Truman himself in 1952 would be seriously diminished. Ever since Mr. Marshall's Harvard speech, American Labour has been running a highly effective campaign—partly of political education and partly of direct lobby pressure—in favour of aid to Britain and against the reactionary forces which are only too anxious to assist Mr. Churchill in strangling British Socialism. This movement of support for Labour Britain has gone so far that the A.F. of L. and C.I.O. are actually seeking to popularise the British export drive among the American trade unionists, who might suffer from British competition.

This change is as revolutionary as it is encouraging. Even as late as 1940, the American Trade Unions and, even more so, American liberals were still traditionally anti-British and wrote off this country as the home of class distinction and the headquarters of imperialism. To-day, because the struggle for the Welfare State is the dominant issue in both countries, Right speaks to Right and Left to Left as never before. Mr. Truman's political future is bound up with that of Mr. Attlee and Mr. Churchill's with Senator Taft's.

It is remarkable that Mr. Aneurin Bevan was the first member of the Government to call attention to this new transatlantic alignment of political forces. Last Thursday he reminded the House of Commons that, if Mr. Churchill has his allies in Wall Street, British Labour also has powerful friends in the U.S.A.; and this friendship is based not on sentiment but on the consciousness of common aims in a common struggle. It was a well-deserved tribute to aid given unstintingly and without, until he spoke, sufficient recognition. It is high time that Transport House woke up to its American responsibilities. A fraternal message to the American Trade Unionists, on strike in their struggle for the Welfare State, would be a modest first beginning of what should become an enduring alliance.

Bankruptcy Postponed

The figures of Britain's payments deficit for the third quarter of the year, which Sir Stafford Cripps announced in his speech at the Lord Mayor's Dinner on Tuesday, make it clear that the decision to devalue the pound was inevitable and could not have been postponed without serious risk that the Bank of England would be unable to honour the cheques drawn on it by other central banks in the sterling area for payment in hard currencies. On September 18 the gold and dollar reserve had fallen to $1,320 million; and, if devaluation had not led to a gain of $80 million in the last twelve days of September—representing payment of bills which had been held back in anticipation of devaluation and the closing, doubtless, of some "short positions" on

the part of foreign speculators—the reserve would have dipped by September 30 well below $1,200 million, a figure quite inadequate to support the needs of the entire sterling area. For the moment, the strain is eased: there may be some further return to London of "funk" capital, and the 43 per cent. tariff wall erected through devaluation by a great part of the trading world against U.S. manufactures should result, at least temporarily, in a spurt of British exports to the non-dollar area. But does this mean that the deficit in dollar payments will be appreciably narrowed? In the third quarter it amounted to $532 million, and it has to be remembered that during those three months we were drawing Marshall Aid at a rate considerably above that likely to be received during the nine months ahead. It seems evident that, irrespective of any improvement achieved in the over-all balance of payments, there will have to be stringent economy in dollar purchases.

The Crisis in France

The devaluation crisis has been too much for the French Government; and M. Queuille's offer of resignation on the issue of the wage increases demanded by M. Daniel Mayer, the Socialist Minister of Labour, is no surprise. The attempt to patch things up with meaningless promises of price-reductions was bound to fail. The *Force Ouvrière*, baulked of any concession in respect of wages or special bonus payments, was threatening a demonstration general strike, and can indeed hardly refrain from such action without forfeiting what hold it has upon the hard-driven working-classes. The Socialist Ministers had been increasingly the helpless prisoners of a predominently Right-wing Government; and calls for their resignation are rising from their alarmed and still-dwindling bodies of *militants* in Paris and in the provinces. Measures are promised, when Parliament reassembles, for a partial restoration of free collective bargaining and for easing the position of the lowest-paid groups of wage-earners, as well as steps for price-reductions, credit contraction, and advance collection of taxes. But nobody seems to expect much relief from these sources. Nor is the proposed French approach to the O.E.E.C. countries for closer financial unity and freer mutual trade likely to produce any immediate relaxation of the internal crisis. Such steps are a natural and right sequel to devaluation; and it is to be regretted that this country left the French to take the initiative in proposing them. In the longer run, they may have great value; but for the present it seems as if the Socialists are on the point of being forced out of the French Government and into reluctant co-operation with the Communist-controlled C.G.T. in pressing for wage-concessions.

The D-Mark Devalued

The unedifying wrangle between Dr. Adenauer, the High Commission and the French Government over the exchange value of the D-Mark has ended in a minor victory for the French. The Germans, invited by the High Commission to table proposals, sought a 25 per cent. devaluation, which would have reduced the exchange value of the D-Mark from 30 to 22.5 U.S. cents. The French, with an eye on the possibilities of the German market as an outlet for Saar steel, objected strongly to this degree of mark devaluation; and in the end the German authorities have agreed under pressure to an exchange rate which makes the D-Mark worth 23.8 U.S. cents. From the British point of view, the question is whether the relatively enhanced exchange value of the D-Mark against sterling will do much to shelter British manufacturers from German competition—particularly in the Scandinavian and other Western European markets. In a pamphlet *Can We Face German Competition?* issued this week by the Union of Democratic Control, it is pointed out that the real wages of German workers are to-day on the average no more than 60 per cent. of what they were in 1936, and that the coalition of German capitalists and U.S. Economic Co-operation Administrators who now control the economy of Western Germany are pursuing with considerable success the policy of re-creating out of low wages and high profits the accumulation of capital (supplemented by American grants and loans) required to make German industry thoroughly competitive once more. With unemployment likely to reach this winter a figure of two million, the German trade unions are impotent to prevent this policy developing into an export drive based on exploited labour and ruthless price-cutting—as British trade unionists, who should be forewarned already by the emergence of German competition in ship-repairing, will discover to their cost. German recovery based on fair wages, adequate social services and planned allocation of exports to fit the needs of an integrated European market would have been welcome. As it is, we are to-day faced with the threat of cut-throat competition from a capitalist slum.

Humpty Dumpty's Exchange Rate

The Argentine's way of dealing with the exchange value is a magnificent example of trying to have everything both ways. The peso has been devalued in relation to the dollar by more than has the pound sterling, and yet the Argentine Government is claiming that Great Britain should pay a greatly increased price for meat, and is trying at the same time to pay less than before for goods exported from Great Britain and also to reduce the sterling payments in dividends owing to British investors. On the proposed basis £1 equals 9.4 pesos when Great Britain is buying meat, but 25.2 pesos when Argentine concerns are paying dividends to British investors. Simultaneously, British exports are formally banned, owing to the shortage of sterling resources, and large blocked funds awaiting conversion into both sterling and dollars are cut down to a fraction of their former value. The whole manœuvre is, of course, absurd: what comes of it will depend on the relative bargaining strength of the parties. Doubtless, the Argentines are counting on the fact that Great Britain's main dependence on their meat falls in the early months of the year, when supplies from other sources are short. A fall in the meat ration would be an awkward accompaniment to a General Election, whatever the cause might be. On the other hand, the Argentine badly needs the British market, and the sharp fall in the peso's dollar value should tend to direct Argentine buying to Great Britain.

China and the West

Formally established at Pekin last Saturday, the People's Republic of China has been recognised by the U.S.S.R. and its associated States with a promptness which points clearly to prearrangement. The next Russian move will presumably be to ask the Security Council to recognise Mao Tse-tung's administration as the legitimate Government of China and, as such, entitled to be one of the five permanent members of the Council enjoying the power of veto. Concurrence of the Council in such a step is unlikely until the U.S.A. and Britain have made up their mind when, and under what conditions, they are prepared to recognise the new *de facto* rulers of the great bulk of China. The U.S. State Department appears to view coldly the brief, and somewhat abruptly worded Note delivered by Chou En-lai, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the new Government, to the American Consul-General of Pekin, declaring that "it is necessary" that normal diplomatic relations should be established between the Republic and "all countries of the world." Britain, however, has commercial interests and investments in China much more vital to her than American interests are to the United States. It is understandable that the State Department, which is still formally committed to financial and moral support of the Kuomintang, should hesitate before entering into negotiations with Mao Tse-tung. But we believe Mr. Bevin realises that Britain cannot afford to procrastinate at the risk of prejudicing all chances of reaching a *modus vivendi* with the new Communist Government. There may well be a case for attaching conditions to recognition: apart from economic questions, there is the important issue of Hongkong and the uncertainty whether Chinese Communism will be regarded in Pekin as an article for export not merely to Tibet but to Indo-China and Malaya. It seems clear, however, that the worst way of seeking a solution of these problems would be for Britain to keep up the pretence that Chiang Kai-shek, whose forces in Formosa are seriously damaging British interests by their blockade of Chinese ports, has a title any longer to represent the legitimate government of China. There is a strong case for a British reply to the Communists' bid for recognition, indicating willingness to discuss terms in a friendly spirit and without delay.

Tito Stands Firm

Marshal Tito continues to give as good as he gets. His Balkan neighbours have followed the Soviet Union in tearing up their treaties of friendship with Yugoslavia. Tito has replied by holding extensive army exercises in the Shumadima and by insisting once more that he will meet force with force. While his ability to conduct an affective defence is open to doubt, that is less important than his intention of fighting if necessary. If his neighbours know that he will not "go quietly"—and that should be clear to them by now—they are less likely to play around with provocative frontier incidents that could easily lead to outright conflict. But tempers must be rising quickly in Cominform and Moscow circles. Piadje has declared that the Moscow trials before the war, like the Rajk affair, were frame-ups. Tito, ostentatiously giving an amnesty to some seven hundred pro-Cominform Yugoslavs, innocently wonders what "monstrous" methods are used by the "Stalinists" to obtain confessions. He goes on to declare that many good Marxists have been done to death on false charges of Trotskyism and claims now to be the champion of Leninism against the perversion of the faith in the U.S.S.R. It must be difficult for the Cominform to take such charges. Yet how can it silence Tito? Yugoslavia has been blockaded, threatened, politically isolated and subjected to every kind of pressure. The only result, so far, has been to make Tito more truculent and to compel him, against his will, to look for support from the West. A climax must come soon. But, short of war, what can Moscow do next?

Mr. Truman's Strategy

Speaking in Kansas City last week, at the largest Democratic rally since his Inauguration, President Truman was as perky and confident as ever. Assuring his audience that the Democrats would win both the mid-term elections and the 1952 campaign, he insisted that much of his Fair Deal would be law before then. He has, in fact, better grounds for optimism than he had some months

ago. He has conciliated some of his opponents on Capitol Hill and has kept Congress hard at work through the Washington summer. So far, he has lost the fight to repeal the Taft-Hartley Act, and to pass a civil rights programme and the Brannan farm income plan—three of his most important policies. But his foreign policy has been ratified right down the line, from the North Atlantic Pact and military assistance to the renewal, without the "peril-point" clause, of the reciprocal trade treaties. Foreign affairs, however, are a different matter from his domestic reform programme, and success in foreign policy is neither a certain electoral asset nor an indication that Congress will be more amenable to the disputed parts of the Fair Deal. The President's strategy, once he failed to push repeal of Taft-Hartley or Negro rights through an obstructive Congress, has been to get essential business out of the way and thus leave the road clear for a renewed row about labour legislation and race relations next session. The Republicans might be more reluctant, with an election just ahead, to join with reactionary Southerners against civil rights at least; and nothing would suit the President and his party better than to stir up once again the issues which were so helpful last November. Much depends, of course, on what happens to the U.S. economy in the next few months. The upswing, predicted for this autumn, is not as rapid or as sure as was expected. And if the steel strike continues, it will have serious secondary repercussions on industry, where steel shortages are already making themselves felt.

The Italian Colonies

The somewhat dreary *Kuhhandel* over the Italian colonies continues. There are now, broadly, two sets of proposals. The Russians continue to press for the independence of the whole of Libya (Cyrenaica, that is, as well as Tripolitania) and the withdrawal of all foreign troops and military bases. Over against this, the majority in the General Assembly has now recognised, or shown itself willing to recognise, British suzerainty over Cyrenaica (including the right to establish military bases there) and French suzerainty over the Fezzan, which is a narrow strip of territory separating Tripolitania from Tunisia. The Italian Government has also recognised these "rights" of Britain and France; and in return the British and French have recognised Italy's "rights" in Somaliland. There remain to be decided the political status of Eritrea and of Tripolitania. Count Sforza has now put up an interesting proposal for the second of these. He urged that the General Assembly should grant Tripolitania immediate independence, with constituent elections within six months, as part of "federal unity" for the whole of Libya. Tripolitania, in other words, would elect an indigenous parliament and govern itself on much the same pattern as that approved by the British for the Senussi in Cyrenaica. An international Control Commission, of which Italy should be a member, would supervise elections and the present British administration would then come to an end. On Eritrea Count Sforza has evidently changed his ground since the abortive agreement with Mr. Bevin. What he now suggests is that Eritrea should not be annexed to Abyssinia but should become independent. These proposals seem realistic. While they recognise implicitly that British and French policy will not at this time allow for the principle of United Nations trusteeship to be applied to the whole area in question, they none the less make an attempt to save what may yet be saved from the maw of imperial strategy.

A DIFFICULT DECISION

When Mr. Bevin returns from Ottawa, the six members of the inner Cabinet will all be together in London; and, after listening to their advice, the Prime Minister will have to make a most difficult decision. He must make up his mind whether, instead of permitting this Parliament to run its full course until next summer, which has been his fixed intention, he should cut short its life by an autumn dissolution.

In order to appreciate the complexity of this problem, it must be realised that a November election—quite apart from the tactical disadvantages to the Labour Party of a winter campaign—would mean sacrificing a most important part of the Government's legislative programme. Two measures, the Steel and the Parliament Bills, on which this Parliament has spent hundreds of weary hours, would fall by the way. If Labour were returned, at least twelve months of its second term of office would be consumed in once again passing both Bills through all their stages. Mr. Attlee and Mr. Morrison are both tidy-minded men. They planned their first five years of power with scrupulous care, in order to ensure that the whole of *Let Us Face the Future* should be on the Statute Book before they asked for another mandate. To do this, meant giving up the advantages to be gained by a "snap" election at a well-chosen moment. It is to their credit that they foreswore these advantages, even though this involved tying themselves, years in advance, to an election in the early summer of 1950. Nothing but a grave national crisis would justify them, at this late hour, in reversing the decision.

Even if they felt inclined to do so, the Tory clamour for an immediate dissolution would provide a natural motive for sticking to their plans. Whereas Mr. Morgan Phillips, at Transport House, has geared his machine to the Party's Jubilee celebrations next February—a fervent re-union, which could well be made an occasion for announcing the election programme—Lord Woolton has been roaring along in top gear all this summer; and it is doubtful if even he can keep up the pace well into next year. For him, an election, following immediately on the Conservative Party Conference next week—at which Mr. Churchill can be expected to provide a rousing key-note speech—would be ideally timed. An autumn dissolution, therefore, might look like a surrender to Tory pressure. The election would be fought—as Mr. Churchill rather too obviously claimed in the debate last week—on ground of his choosing and at a time which suits his Party machine.

In discussing the course which the Prime Minister should take, it is idle to dismiss or overlook these arguments against a November election. They are extremely powerful; and only the gravest reasons of State would justify him in so abruptly changing his plans. Do these reasons of State exist?

If we seek to exclude Party tactics from our minds, the situation which confronts us is fairly clear. The Government has been compelled, at the beginning of its fifth year of office, to devalue the pound. In the events which led up to this defeat—for that is what it is—Tory politics played a very considerable role. A campaign of political denigration in the Tory Press and a highly publicised speech by Mr. Churchill at Wolverhampton contributed largely to the undermining of confidence in the pound during the critical weeks of June and July. We do not say this in order to blame the Conservative Party—no doubt it is the task of the Opposition to oppose—but merely to record the adverse effect on the nation of the Tory electioneering which went on through the summer and which is bound to increase in irresponsibility until this Parliament is dissolved. So too, we do not blame Mr. Churchill too severely for his assertion last week that no one can any longer trust the word of Sir Stafford Cripps when he speaks as Chancellor of the Exchequer. If taken seriously, it will do this country the gravest damage; but it was a typical electioneering sally, which Mr. Churchill would expect any Opposition leader to make against himself in a similar situation. In undermining the electorate's confidence in a Labour Chancellor, he is bound simultaneously to undermine the confidence of the outside world in Britain just when it is of crucial importance to regain that confidence. The conclusion is unavoidable. Since the election campaign has already started—last week's three-day debate proved that at least—national interests demand that it should be concluded as soon as possible, so that the world can know where Britain stands.

But would not Labour's chances be diminished by an early dissolution? This is a question which Mr. Attlee is bound to ask himself. Altruism is no part of party politics, as Mr. Churchill's behaviour this summer made abundantly clear; and no reasons of State could be sufficient to induce a Labour Premier to dissolve Parliament at a time gravely disadvantageous to his Party's chances of success. But we do not believe that the country has been unduly impressed by the Tories' attempts to show that devaluation—which they knowingly conspired to produce this summer—is an unmitigated disaster now that it has occurred. Whenever it comes, the election will be fought neither on the issue of devaluation nor on the vague and optimistic programmes put forward by the contending Parties. The questions which the elector has already asked himself are: "Do I want Winnie back in this crisis or no? If there has to be retrenchment, shall I do better under Crippsian austerity and 'fair shares for all' or under the Churchillian recipe of 'setting the people free'?" Whatever the pundits of the Party machines may say, the timing of the election is not likely to make very much difference either to the issues on which it is fought or to the result.

In the second place it should be noted that Mr. Churchill is not always the best judge of his Party's electoral interests. In 1945, believing his leadership to be as indispensable in peace-time as in war-time, he coolly and deliberately forced an unwilling Labour Party into a snap election at his own time and on his own apparently impregnable ground. The manœuvre boomeranged. This country has a profound distrust for politicians who regard themselves as indispensable and it respects men old-fashioned enough to risk a tactical disadvantage because of the country's need for a new Parliament and a Government with a fresh mandate. In a November election, the glaring contrast between the personalities of Mr. Attlee and Mr. Churchill might once again be decisive.

For the country realises that devaluation by itself is no policy at all. If we are to gain any advantage from it, it must be strongly buttressed with external and domestic policies, which are bound to include highly unpopular and controversial features. In the next Budget, the divergent claims of defence and the social services must be faced; and the dangers of inflation firmly met. As Sir Stafford showed only too clearly in his vague Mansion House speech, neither of

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these problems can be tackled decisively by a Government still facing the test of the poll; still less can any sense of responsibility be expected from an Opposition hopeful of victory, if it can only disguise for a few more months its deep disbelief in full employment. Instead of frankly telling the country the problems which must be solved, both Parties, if the election is delayed, will be constrained to outbid each other in vague but dangerous promises; and the time gained by devaluation for putting our house in order will be dissipated.

Finally, there is the problem of the Trade Unions. Devaluation has already had its effect in abating Mr. Figgin's claims for the railwaymen and providing an escape from the go-slow and consequent chaos which threatened the railways. For the first time, the Unions seem really prepared to consider the merits of a national minimum wage and to accept as a temporary expedient wage increases for the lowest paid categories of workers which do not extend up the whole hierarchy. But there is still one stumbling block in the way of whole-hearted Trade Union collaboration in the productivity campaign—the prospect of a return to Tory rule and unemployment. This prospect, more than any other single factor, is responsible for the retention of restrictive practices. One can hardly blame the Trade Union leader to-day who obstinately insures against the return of Mr. Churchill and argues that, as long as he is uncertain about the continuance of Labour rule, he is bound to retain the most powerful defensive weapons of class war. The re-election of the Labour Party in fact is the prerequisite of success in the productivity campaign; the longer it is postponed the longer we shall have to wait for results.

Such are the arguments which Mr. Attlee will have to consider with his colleagues before he makes up his mind. The decision is by no means as easy as the advocates of either course like to make out. We believe, however, that on balance the case for an early dissolution is the stronger; and that, if the Prime Minister is bold enough to meet Mr. Churchill on his own ground and at his own time, he will dash his hopes, as he did four years ago.

BACK TO BELGRADE

I HADN'T been in Yugoslavia for five months, but from the moment I crossed the frontier in the Orient Express I could feel that the quarrel with Russia had made spectacular progress during that short interval. A couple of Yugoslav soldiers joined me in my compartment at Ljubljana and before long they were telling me that Stalin was a deviationist and has always been one and had I ever heard of "Lenin's Testament?" Yugoslavia alone, they said, was now the home of pure Marxist-Leninism.

The Zagreb station was gaily decorated with flags and Five Year Plan posters—one of them incidentally demanding that trains should be punctual, and, by heaven, ours was only twenty minutes late, which was great progress since last winter. Later in the dining car (this also was a novelty for me) there was a bunch of loquacious Croats who were saying that the Zagreb Fair was a great success with large displays of goods by British, American, Italian and other Western exhibitors, although there was a complete boycott by the Eastern countries. The Yugoslav stands, they said, were very impressive too. But one man with more of a debunking spirit said that all the tractors, automobiles, refrigerators and what not were just a lot of prototypes which didn't mean a blessed thing.

Although we were having a reasonable lunch in the dining car they all candidly agreed that the food situation in Yugoslavia was still far from perfect, and in many places really miserable. While there is a tendency among Government spokesmen, including Tito, to blame Russians for the "sufferings and hardships," of the Yugoslav people to-day, the unsatisfactory food situation is actually due primarily to internal causes. It is true, however, that at least in one respect the boycott by the Eastern countries has severely hit Yugoslavia and has had its effect on food distribution and much else. It has, for example, contributed to transport difficulties. Yugoslavia uses in the main Unrra-supplied trucks and Czechoslovak models. The former are now practically worn out, while spare parts for the latter are almost unobtainable.

Belgrade looked the same as usual. Groups of Tito Youth and other voluntary workers were singing as they marched along the streets. Many of them looked down at the heel and scarcely enthusiastic. Volunteers and other workers had dug up a half-mile of Belgrade's main street, mostly with picks and shovels with hardly a pneumatic drill in evidence. They were remaking pavements which had been badly built by volunteers a couple of years ago. Ration cards appear to be honoured in Belgrade, though I gather that supplies are not available regularly in some other cities. Altogether there is a good deal of discontent, fatigue, and inertia. And yet—and that is the important thing—the country has not broken down economically, and if there is not a great deal of improvement in living conditions since last April, there is no deterioration either. In fact some small improvements can be observed. There are greater quantities of textiles in the shops and these are of rather better quality than before. This ought to put the peasants with their system of linked price coupons (in which they are largely paid for food deliveries) in somewhat better mood.

Pictures of Stalin have almost disappeared, though one still sees a few occasionally. Day after day *Borba* and other newspapers and magazines work themselves up into a polemical white heat against the Soviet Union. Personal attacks against Stalin are usually, but not always, avoided in the perhaps naive belief that this will give Uncle Joe a loophole to liquidate one day all those who can be denounced as responsible for the quarrel with Yugoslavia. Apart from that, the breach with the Soviet Union is obviously complete and final; and one has the impression that, having embarked on the quarrel, the Yugoslav leaders, with Balkan exuberance and recklessness, are immensely enjoying this mud-slinging and spilling of the beans. Even if they go down fighting, they will do so with the satisfying feeling that they have overlooked no opportunities for hurling insults or revealing indiscretions. However, the fact that the Yugoslavs are shouting defiance at Russia from the house tops probably means that they are pretty sure that the Red army won't march. And, knowing this, they feel they can indulge in a great verbal contest which must at times make the Russians highly uncomfortable.

The counter-attack on Russia follows several lines. It charges Russia with aggressive designs, sabre rattling, and imperialism. It accuses Russia of being a colonial exploiter of the Eastern bloc, particularly of Hungary and Rumania. The Russians also wanted to treat Yugoslavia as a colony, but Tito wouldn't allow that. The governments of the Eastern States are made up of nothing but hirelings of Moscow, especially men like Rakosi. Further, Russia has not developed any Marxist theory concerning the equal co-existence of several Socialist States, and it is applying to its partners the methods of capitalist exploitation. This attack is accompanied by the claim that Yugoslav leaders alone have elaborated such Marxist theory; therefore let the nations of the People's Democracies look to Belgrade for guidance. All this is presented with jovial Yugoslav cocksureness bordering on arrogance.

Yugoslav leaders think they can cause havoc among the Communist parties of Western Europe. They also believe that while pro-Titoism, which they identify with Mr. Zilliacus, French newspapers like *Franc Tireur*, *Combat* and others, as well as all kinds of "Anti-Stalin Communists," may to-day represent only a certain intellectual attitude, it may before long become a real political influence. This Yugoslav propaganda is like a call to revolt to Communist forces dissatisfied with the Soviet Union. Nothing is lacking: the technique of the Moscow trials as applied to Budapest, Dimitrov dying of a broken heart if not worse, the Cominform a mere Russian rubber stamp which dissolved after it had served its purpose of outlawing Yugoslavia, etc. All this is very different from the situation in July, 1948, when, according to Belgrade, the scoundrels in the Cominform, like Rakosi, Dimitrov, and Anna Pauker, pulled a fast one on poor unsuspecting Joe Stalin. Crowning all this new propaganda was Tito's speech of September 27, delivered, significantly enough, at Stolice where in 1941 the foundations were laid for the partisan movement. "Digging trenches in Hungary and Rumania is sabre-rattling, and an attempt to frighten us. We are not the kind of people who can be frightened!"

Correspondents for the Western Press have no difficulty getting to Belgrade nowadays. They send out "flashes"—"Troop movements in Hungary and Rumania. Soviet Tanks roaring down Hungarian plain. Frontier incidents. More frontier incidents. Will Russia invade?" And Bang! out comes Tito with a passionate plea for the rights of small nations. This is nicely timed, for Uno is meeting, and the whole world is watching the Yugoslav delegation—and Vyshinsky.

Can Vyshinsky stand all this or will he go purple one fine day and announce that the Red army has had to liberate Belgrade from the Fascists?

It is obvious from all this that the Yugoslav leaders must feel pretty safe, and are taking their long awaited revenge for the "ideological insults" they have been suffering during the past sixteen months. They must feel fairly confident that the Soviet underground in Yugoslavia is of negligible importance. This is partly because Rankovic's police is every bit as efficient as the M.V.D. and partly, perhaps, because there is not enough enthusiasm for Russia among the population generally. Moreover, the mud-slinging has been effective in destroying some of the sympathy formerly felt here for Russia.

Encouraged by this propaganda one finds any number of Yugoslavs to-day who recall their experience of the Red Army in Yugoslavia and say, with superior air, "Good soldiers but uncultured" or else rehash one of the usual rape stories. The Yugoslavs are now trying in many ways to embarrass the leaders of the People's Democracies. Rakosi, it is now disclosed, came

to Belgrade early in 1948 and complained that the Russians were sucking Hungary dry. And unspecified Rumanians are quoted as saying that the "damned Russians are tearing the skin from our backs." In short, the Yugoslavs claim that there is deep disloyalty to Russia even among her stooges. And poor Dimitrov—treated almost as a Yugoslav hero—is now reported by Piadje as saying, after the first Russian Central Committee's blast at the Yugoslavs, "Stand firm, boys."

All this raises the interesting question of why Russia outlawed Yugoslavia by Cominform resolution. Was it a disastrous Russian mistake and did they thereby smash the unity of the Eastern bloc with dire consequences which are now becoming fully apparent? Or is it true, as Yugoslavs now clearly admit, that Tito was in fact heading a revolt against Russian "colonialism" and against Russian prohibition of the Balkan federation, an idea cherished by Tito and Dimitrov? Or would Russia have found Yugoslavia more manageable if no Cominform resolution had been launched? The arrests of Hebrang and Zukovic were signals to the Russians that now was the time to act. Certainly the Yugoslavs are to-day doing their utmost to cause the greatest damage to the Russian position in Eastern Europe and to the "hireling" governments. What effect will it all have in these countries where, of course, the official line is to call Tito Fascist and "Titler"?

Tito seems convinced that "Titoism" has a real future in all of Eastern Europe. Only where do we go from here? Many Yugoslavs ask with curiosity rather than with anxiety. What, if any, will be the reactions inside the Yugoslav Communist party once the breach with Russia is complete? How large a pro-Russian faction is there inside the party? It does not seem to be large and appears for the present impotent. Such being the case, it is not clear what card, short of a most improbable invasion, the Russians have to play. Or are the Russians going to try to isolate Yugoslavia as "Fascist" in the expectation that eventually the Yugoslav people will realise that one can't build Socialism in one country, especially of Yugoslavia's size, independently of the Soviet Union? The opinion here is that the Russians won't invade Yugoslavia unless they are completely convinced of the inevitability of war. The real danger to Russia derives, of course, from the ideological challenge of Titoism with its systematic debunking of Stalinism. And how will the Russians counteract that? Calling Tito names isn't enough.

Belgrade, September 29th. ALEXANDER WERTH

A LONDON DIARY

THE pros and cons of an early General Election are dispassionately discussed in a leading article. The serious "pro" argument is that no Government can carry through any policy properly in an atmosphere of electoral uncertainty, and that with the pound devalued it is particularly important for Britain not to remain, so to speak, with one foot in the air. Sir Stafford Cripps must be feeling this with particular strength after his icy reception in the City on Tuesday. The Penguins hope for the Government's defeat and are not going to help to steady the pound. This argument ought, I think, to be decisive, but I shall myself be surprised if we have an election before next Spring. If I am right, the real reason will be that the Party machine feels that it is still not ready and will strongly oppose the group of Ministers round Sir Stafford who see most clearly the danger of waiting. No decision, I understand, has yet been made. Mr. Attlee is said to be against an early election. Mr. Morrison must also be strongly influenced by Transport House considerations. The deadlock cannot long remain. The decisive factor may well be Ernest Bevin's weight in the scales.

* * *

The South African Dutch have never forgiven the British for abolishing slavery in 1834; to-day, with the Malan Government in power, they have discovered a very ingenious and profitable way of reintroducing it. The idea, brilliant in its simplicity, is to maintain private gaols which employers can always keep full and from which they can draw convict labour as they wish. On September 2 the Minister of Justice of the Orange Free State, Mr. Swart, opened one of these gaols at Leslie. It was built by the Leslie Farmers' Association Labour Supply Company, which has fifty shareholders with shares worth £40 each. Its private gaol will house three hundred Negroes; it is the fifth of its kind in the Bethal district, which means, as Mr. Swart pointed out, that more than a thousand farm-labourer convicts will be conveniently available for the employers. He denounced critics of this system as "malicious, ill-informed and mischievous." In the South African press there are charming photographs of Mr. Swart and the Director of Prisons looking happily through the bars at an uninterrupted vista of perpetual convict labour. The system seems quite perfect and the slavery absolute. There can never be a shortage of recruits since there are always natives who have not paid their annual poll tax (£1 for each adult male) or who, having paid, have lost the receipt or who have entered a railway carriage marked "Europeans Only," gone into the railway station by the wrong entrance or committed some similar crime. Once in prison, the man can be treated precisely as seems fit to his employers or to the police, who, I'm told, are almost all Africanders, firm believers that nothing is too bad for those whose skins are darker than their own. This would seem to ensure the constant supply of labour for the farms. It had been getting short at the current rate of 10s. a month wages plus a bag of mealie meal and the privilege of being allowed to eat the meat of any animal that died by accident or disease on the farm.

* * *

In Paris a few days ago I found Unesco excited about the withdrawal from the Conference chamber of the Poles, Czechs and Hungarians. They objected to money being spent on helping the new reactionary Western German Government. This gesture will, of course, win the sympathy of everyone in Eastern Europe where there is no danger that the horrors of German aggression will be forgotten. Afterwards, I talked to one of the leading Eastern European delegates who had walked out of the Conference. What did he think should be done about Germany? He, of course, wanted the solution put forward by Russia at the last Paris Conference and treated, in the West—unwisely, I think—as mere propaganda. Naturally afraid of Western Germany being rebuilt for military purposes by the Americans, the Eastern bloc insists that Germany should be unified and all Allied troops moved over the frontiers. "Why," I asked, "do you really favour this? Surely it is clear that any Government in a unified Germany to-day will be violently anti-Communist and will be in a position to play East and West off against each other, will seek an American alliance, and will have in the forefront of its programme the return to Germany of territories taken by Poland and Russia." My Unesco friend looked very troubled, but said: "There are, of course, dangers, but it cannot be as you say since this is the policy of the Soviet Union. Russia could not sponsor a policy that would be dangerous to herself or to Communism." I replied that he had more confidence in the Soviet Government knowing its own interests than I had in Western Governments being similarly far-sighted. Neither of us said what must have been clear to both of us—that this Soviet policy about Germany seems logically to imply another partition of Poland. But this conversation is already out of date. There is to be an Eastern German State to balance the Government at Bonn and the practical question in a divided Germany is how to persuade the Powers to find a working agreement to avoid a competition rearming of the two Zones.

* * *

Oswald Garrison Villard, who died last week, was the finest surviving example of an old-fashioned American liberal. He was a great crusader for good causes, but though he would have been astonished to hear it, he had no coherent social philosophy. He was an able military analyst, but in the first world war he gave Wilson the slogan "Too proud to fight," and his pacifism almost ruined his New York evening paper, the *Post*. Again, in 1940, his opposition to "preparedness" led to a final break with the *Nation*, which he had both owned and edited until 1933. He was the grandson of William Lloyd Garrison, the abolitionist, and he continued to fight for Negro equality. He was wealthy—his father had built the Northern Pacific Railway—and knew personally the gilded figures of America's Golden Age. But for fifty years he aimed his rather pernickety iconoclasm at their stupidities and its abuses. In the United States there are two kinds of liberal. One, as the saying goes, is a radical with a wife and two children. The other is a liberal because he is the odd man out. Villard belonged to the latter category, from which are drawn most of those heretics who are the salt of the earth. Such men thrive on periodic unpopularity. Lloyd Garrison was once the most unpopular man in New England. His grandson followed him in having the courage to say what he thought without caring for the consequences.

* * *

On Tuesday night I watched the great annual event on the Victoria Embankment. Against a heavy grey sky I noticed, from half a dozen different directions, small darker grey clouds moving towards Charing Cross. They changed shape as they came. When they were near I could see that they were each composed of thousands of starlings. When two clusters approached each other they joined forces, like local processions converging on the Embankment for a May Day Celebration. At last they formed one great cloud over the Gardens. It bellied out into an inflated balloon, then, with surprising speed, narrowed into a long trailing sausage, from which small groups hived off over Trafalgar Square, the Shell building and Waterloo. Soon they were back again, joining up, splitting and wheeling about like a vast army of trained soldiers. It must have been the best part of an hour before they settled down for the night on the buildings of Trafalgar Square. When the trees on the Embankment are bare they will cover them as thickly as leaves do now. I suppose that some ornithologist has written an account of the habits of these birds and their annual gatherings. Are there a given number of centres in England where they always meet each year? From what distances do they come each evening? How many groups combine to make a division and an army? These and a score of other questions seem to me to want answering. But, perhaps, the oddest thing is that the human groups who

wander about the Gardens scarcely look up at a spectacle which is at least as exciting as any aircraft display they will pay money to see.

CRITIC

THE BIRD

The Lord Mayor and whole Corporation
A banquet laid on at Guildhall,
A civic and State celebration
Where a good time was promised for all.
The Lord Mayor "requested the pleasure . . ."
The Chancellor pleasure expressed,
And they borrowed the Mansion House treasure
To honour the Treasury guest.

The bankers and merchants asked whether
The feast on gold plate they should serve,
Which Cripps could melt down altogether
To build up the bullion reserve.
The City is given to panic
At the cost of all Socialist boons,
So the heads of the corps Aldermanic
Resolved to take care of the spoons.

Soon mirth at the banquet rang hollow
As the loving-cup passed from the host,
For they thought of the pill they must swallow
When the Chancellor answered the toast.
The goose on the diners lay heavy
And so did the stuffing and sauce,
For the fear of a capital levy
Can ruin a capital course.

But the Chancellor's lucid oration
On the state of the National Purse
Displayed not the least agitation—
In fact, it showed quite the reverse.
To come to the heart of the matter
They all in thanksgiving should join,
Since the purse was decidedly fatter
By means of debasing the coin.

They could all bring prosperity nearer
And the lead in recovery keep
Though merchants bought merchandise dearer,
If persistent in selling it cheap;
While those who more profit were earning
Would feel themselves morally bound,
A higher taxation returning
To keep the economy sound.

The audience seriously shaken
As they gathered the Chancellor's sense,
Perceived he was saving his bacon
At the bankers' and merchants' expense.
Their faces grew bleaker and bleaker
And, as from this speech they inferred
Their goose had been cooked by the speaker,
They all gave the speaker the bird.

SAGITTARIUS

THIS ENGLAND

Prizes are awarded of £1 for the first entry and 5/- for each of the others printed. Paste entries on a POSTCARD.

The fear that the devaluation of the pound would mean "more hardship in Southport than anywhere else," was expressed by Mr. R. S. Hudson, M.P., when he spoke at the Prince of Wales Hotel last night.—*Southport Visiter.* (Charles Maycock.)

I am not a nudist, but I always say my prayers in the nude. It seems to bring me nearer to God.—Letter in *Sunday Dispatch.* (R. A. J. Evans.)

In a shop-lifting case at Southend to-day it was said that a woman, after stealing a canvas bag, went to the store manager and said it was not suitable. She asked for a 25s. refund.—*Evening Standard.* (T. Fisher.)

The R.S.P.C.A. yesterday appealed to greyhound fanciers to show their sportsmanship by accepting a levy on greyhound racing, to raise funds for the "re-education of outcast dogs." . . .

The greyhound had been made unfit for canine society by men who sought profit or entertainment, and it was plainly the responsibility of the "industry" to foot the bill for making the outcasts into "good dog citizens."—*Observer.* (Roger Till.)

ISSUES AT THE HAGUE

HERE, in The Hague, after five weeks of discussion at the Round Table Conference, the Indonesians and the Dutch know that there is no turning back to pre-war relations. To that extent, at least, the Indonesians are confident. Most Dutch now regard Indonesia's independence as inevitable; some view it with fear, some with paternal anxiety, some with anger and a few with satisfaction. I met young Socialists who, growing up in an age of decaying Empires, resigned from the Dutch Labour Party because it failed to protest against the policy of trying to hold Indonesia by force. The extreme point of view is expressed by Professor Gerbrandy's blimpish "Committee for the Maintenance of Empire Unity" and by a small group in Batavia called the "Committee for National Revival" which recently requested Queen Juliana to present New Guinea to the Eurasians.

The opening speeches at the Round Table Conference, on August 23, suggested friendly resignation on the part of the Dutch, cautious confidence on the part of the Federalists (Indonesians coming from the so-called autonomous areas set up or sponsored by the Dutch) and quiet determination on the part of the Republicans led by Prime Minister Hatta. "Before the year 1950 sets in," he said, "Indonesia must be independent and the Republic of United Indonesia established, vested with complete and real sovereignty. This is a demand of mass psychology that should not be overlooked." The third participant in the Conference is the United Nations Commission for Indonesia, without whose patient, constructive statesmanship (it was set up by the Security Council in October 1947), the Dutch and the Indonesians would probably still be fighting. Its Chairman advised the Conference to lay aside "old blueprints which have proved unworkable," and to refrain from wasting valuable hours discussing past mistakes. The following day's debate in the Dutch Second Chamber further demonstrated Dutch good will; even the Catholic leader, Professor Romme, one of the chief architects of his Government's disastrous policy, gave the delegates a reluctant welcome.

Much of this good will, however, was dissipated in four weeks of long-drawn out discussion on the legalities of the transference of power, when the essential need was mutual trust in the formulation of general principles. This is partly a difference of approach, of national psychology. The Dutch do not always understand that finesse is more effective than rigidity, and that firmness is no substitute for imagination. Long experience of the heavy-handed Dutch paternalism, has made the Indonesians highly sensitive; they believe that personal relations are more important than dotted lines, and that the most meticulously correct formula is a dead letter if the two signatories do not trust each other. Again, the Dutch—even those who sincerely desire the success of the Conference—move leisurely, whilst some certainly hope that protracted negotiations may lead to a failure or a compromise that must break down. The Indonesians were fighting a guerilla war only two months ago; their followers at home have the impatience of the guerilla fighter, they suspect legal formulae, and they are already hinting that Dr. Hatta should return if there is no agreement by the middle of this month. This is an amber light to the Conference. If Dr. Hatta's Government fell, its successor would certainly assume the enmity of the Dutch who, in that event, might be tempted to try force once more with repercussions that would result far beyond the Indonesian Archipelago.

This is the crucial week of the Conference; the week of hard bargaining in the Finance and Economic Committee. The Dutch, like any other Empire-builder, do not make concessions easily. Their own economy is so closely integrated with that of Indonesia that they hesitate to give way on any point; they try to forget that guerilla warfare has already destroyed or gravely damaged the most efficiently run plantations and that they have already lost at least 200 million pounds since the first military action in 1947. Unrealistic propositions are not only a threat to the Conference, but also to Dutch investments. Take the example of the debts. The Dutch want the Republic to assume all debts and obligations committed by the Netherlands Government up to the moment of the transfer of power, which includes, of course, the cost of military operations. And they suggest that, as long as Indonesia is in a position of debt to the Netherlands, the future Indonesian Government shall for that period not alter existing laws or enact new ones in economic or financial fields nor commit itself to loans unless prior agreement is given by the Dutch.

Similarly, in the matter of currency and the circulation bank. The Indonesians stand firmly on the point that they automatically assume all debts made prior to March 3rd, 1942 (when the Dutch surrendered to Japan), but that in the case of debts incurred after 1942 they reserve the right to investigate and to decide which debts were incurred for the interest of the Indonesian people. And, they add with very reasonable firmness, that in no case will they take over the debts of military expenditure undertaken to destroy the Republic. On this last point, the Indonesians are said to be willing to consider prior consultation whenever Dutch interests are directly concerned. Other problems facing this Committee include the taking over of existing, and the granting of future concessions, monetary and trade relations between the Netherlands and the United Republic of Indonesia.

The Military Committee, too, has its tense moments. Most difficult of all problems is the withdrawal of Dutch troops. This is accepted in principle, but when the Indonesians are told that withdrawal will take two years because of the shipping shortage, they cannot be blamed if they reply that no shipping problems seem insoluble when the traffic of troops is outward bound from Amsterdam. Another problem exists in the matter of incorporating Indonesian troops now serving in the Netherlands Army into the new Army of the United States of Indonesia. Difficult in any case, this problem is immensely complicated by the fact that the Dutch have used these troops in both their military actions (July 1947 and December 1948) against their compatriots.

These very real difficulties must not be allowed to obscure the substantial progress made by the Political Committee. Unless and until the basic political issues are agreed on, all others inevitably hang fire. Agreement has been reached on the character of the Union Statute, on the position and function of the Head of the Union, the duties and the composition of the Conferences of Ministers of the Union Partners (the Netherlands and the United States of Indonesia) and of the Court of Arbitration of the Union. These were often matters of interpretation, even of words which meant precisely the same in both languages, but vital none the less.

The most significant factor in this Conference is the co-operation of the Republicans and Federalists who submit joint political, economic, military and cultural memoranda. This co-operation between two parties, whom the Dutch had expected to play off against each other, was worked

out last spring in the remote island of Bangka where President Soekarno and Prime Minister Hatta had been taken after the second Dutch military action. The Dutch bombs dropped on Jogjakarta with the object of crushing the Republic had just the opposite effect; they helped the Federalists to join up with the Republic, and at an Inter-Indonesian Conference in Java in August, they worked out a common programme with which to meet the Dutch delegates at The Hague.

Republicans and Federalists share the determination to see the transference of power by the end of 1949. Until the Constituent Assembly is formed at the end of a year following transference, the present federal structure will be the basis of the United States of Indonesia. The Dutch selected the areas for military and economic reasons, and they may be changed. But the principle of federalism is accepted; both Republicans and Federalists appreciate the need to avoid that over-centralisation which would be inevitable in a unitary State governing an area as large as that between the Irish coast and the Caspian Sea.

It we assume, as we probably can, that some rather grudging formula of agreement is accepted by the Dutch, then the United States of Indonesia will come into existence by the end of this year. Member States of the United Nations must lose no time in recognising it and welcoming it into every international organisation. This new country can also make its own contribution. The product, partly, of the United Nations Commission, it can use this prestige to strengthen international organisation. The Indonesians will need economic aid in opening up the vast riches of the Archipelago where, after three centuries of Dutch rule, development has been mainly confined to Java and Sumatra. The capital and the experts required can no longer come only from Holland. The international machinery of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations seems the appropriate instrument. The ten million people of Holland, the seventy-two millions of Indonesia and all the rest of the world, which urgently needs the food and the raw materials of the South Pacific, can all benefit. East and West can enrich each other. Whether this new era begins now depends on the Round Table Conference at The Hague.

DOROTHY WOODMAN

THE UNNATURAL COUNTRYSIDE

"GOD made the country and Man made the town." The line is probably one of the most famous in our literature. It is unquestionably one of the most fatuous and it enshrines and maintains one of the basic canonical fallacies of the Great Urban Mythology which so perverts and obscures our sense of rural reality. Indeed, it is astounding that Cowper should have committed such a line, for it occurs in *The Task* which he wrote in the year 1783 at Olney, where he had settled in 1767. Now in 1768, the Open Fields of this parish were enclosed and the poet must therefore have watched with his own eyes the farming system, the stock and the crops, the fields and the very agricultural landscape change under the authority of a highly secular Act of Parliament. But it is even more astounding that men to-day can still quote this tag quite seriously and without laughter.

For this implied contrast between the "natural" countryside and the "artificial" town is quite untenable. The farm is as much the product of human effort as the factory, the field as the street, and throughout a greater part of our history, a greater part of our people have devoted a greater part of their energies to making and keeping the countryside a place fit for farming. They have cleared forests, drained marshes, dug and enclosed fields, created farmland by cultivation and manuring, maintained it by suppressing the natural vegetation and stocked it with plants and beasts of their own choice and breeding. With axe and fire, with hoe, plough and sickle, with hedge, ditch and tile-pipe, with experiment, research and enquiry, above all with an infinity of human work, thought and perseverance was our farmland created and maintained. To call this achievement natural is, therefore, a strange insult to the dead generations to whose prodigious labours we owe so much of it. Where they went barefoot and in darkness we, their better-equipped descendants, go lighted and shod; but it was they who prepared the path. And as for the evidence for these things, it is written across the face of the countryside in letters as tall as a spruce or a larch, as wide as a Fenland river, and as enduring as ridge-and-furrow in Midland clay.

Consider, for instance, the reduction of the woodlands, a story now obscure and in part altogether lost, for much of it was completed by Tudor times. Take an axe and cut down a tree, take a spade and dig up its roots and go on doing this till you have cleared an acre; and then halt and marvel at the achievement of our ancestors, perhaps one in number to our ten and harassed in a way that we have forgotten by the demands of food, water, clothing, housing and fuel, who with their crude tools and no mechanical power of any sort yet hewed from primæval scrub so much of the farmland which now serves us. Consider, again, the Fenlands, now the richest soil in England but once a watery desolation three-quarters of a million acres in extent. There are centuries of human effort behind this achievement; Norman baron, mediæval monk, Stuart "adventurer," Victorian improver all played their part and it was the engineer of the Power Age who finally clamped human mastery on the waters. Consider, further, the Agricultural Revolution when a nation with so much of its man-power absorbed in the new factories or the Napoleonic wars contrived so astonishingly to improve and extend its farming system.

All this is no doubt obvious, as are certain aspects of man's control of the animal world, such as the extinction in England of the wolf and the wild boar. But his creative work in the animal kingdom, though more recent, is less generally recognised. For the craving for Spring in the mediæval ballads expressed no mere sentimental yearning but bitter economic need. In those days lack of winter-keep compelled an annual slaughter of stock and when the warm weather and the fresh grass tarried cattle died as the hay ran out and later men went hungry. But the coming of the turnip, the swede and the mangel-wurzel in the Eighteenth Century allowed stock to survive the winter in numbers and health and so the farmer could shape or improve his beasts by systematic breeding. Thus, in 1710, bullocks coming to London averaged some 270 lbs., sheep 28 lbs. In 1795 the figures were 800 lbs. and 80 lbs. respectively. Further, new types were produced to meet new needs and between 1780 and 1850 one area alone, East Anglia, developed two new types of beast and improved one old. The dual-purpose Red Poll was created by interbreeding the Norfolk Horned, a meat type, with the Suffolk Poll, a milk type, while the leggy, restless Norfolk sheep, suitable for the poor, extensive grazings of the old commons, were crossed with Southdowns to produce a large, easily fattened animal for folding on the roots of the New Farming. The Suffolk Punch, however, merely needed an admixture of lighter, wirier strains to suit the changed conditions. All this is but one local instance of the process whereby the stock we see on farms to-day was bred and created. So when, a few years ago, a clergyman denounced promiscuity as "farmyard morality" he created much amusement among those connected with farmyards. For nowhere are the sexual urges more rigidly and purposefully controlled.

And the hand of man lies as heavily on the vegetable as on the animal world. Indeed, he may have turned plant-breeder as soon as he turned cultivator, for the Bread Wheats are not known in a wild state but are almost certainly a hybrid and very possibly the result of cultivation. And to-day there is scarcely a crop which has not been adapted or improved for agricultural purposes. Take, for instance, the potato. The average commercial variety lasts only some twenty five years, partly because of degeneration from disease but also because of deliberate change to meet the varying tastes of the consumer. Take sugar beet which, when first processed in the late Eighteenth Century, yielded some seven per cent. of sugar but which has since been bred to produce twice that amount. Take the endless varieties of wheat, barley and oats, each bred for a special purpose or a special soil. Take, too, the grasses and clovers among which man has achieved some of his greatest triumphs, for though ley farming is nothing new the scientific knowledge behind seeds mixtures and the production of the new types associated with the name of Stapledon are barely a generation old. Those who see "only grass" in a field of temporary pasture should realise that they are looking at one of the technical triumphs of *Homo Sapiens et Faber*, the animal that thinks and makes tools.

The countryside, therefore, is not natural and this fallacy has been discussed at length because of the poison it contains. For if our farmland and the crops and stock it carries were natural they could be left to nature. But since they were created by human effort, so by human effort must they be maintained. Neglect is costly and there is bitter and extended truth in the proverb that "one year's seeding means seven years' weeding." So the farmer and his men resemble the repair gangs of an industrial city under bombardment, patiently coping with weeds, with silt in ditches, with the exuberance of hedges, natural decay in buildings and fences, the leaching away of plant-foods and the degeneration of leys, and only so long as their efforts control the damage will the farm continue as a fully productive unit. The price of farmland, therefore, is constant vigilance and when this relaxes nature returns and the farm "goes back." The present writer, for instance, has seen eighty acres of good marsh-grazing, reclaimed in Napoleonic times, revert in a night to salt lake when the sea-walls failed and he has tried in vain to scramble through a seven-acre thorn thicket which grew where men still living had once harvested corn. The background to our farming industry, therefore, is work; work to create, work to maintain, work to produce; work that is heavy, deliberate, sustained and endless.

Our forefathers knew this, for when they followed their horned plough-teams up the long strips of the Open Fields, they could see, out of the corners of their eyes, the patient shade of Famine pacing behind them, waiting for mistakes, for idleness, for bad seasons. But we of to-day have forgotten him; even now we tend

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to regard food as "something that happens." an almost automatic part of life. Yet this "cheap food" to which the Nineteenth Century accustomed us is a fallacy and too often the real price was paid by the helpless and exploited land which grew it. And now the truth is upon us. It is not nature which keeps Famine away from us; it is conscious and systematic human effort.

Further, since the farm is a human achievement, it lies within the sphere of the human will. Hence the danger of this picturesque fallacy, so often heard in varied terms, that "Acts of Parliament won't make corn grow." When uttered with a slight rural accent and reinforced by the correct sort of gestures with the correct sort of pipe, this remark can be most effective. Nevertheless, analysis shows its absurdity. For Acts of Parliament are not aimed at nature but at men—and the growing of corn is a human activity. It was men who once created and now maintain the fields in which it grows, men who bred the variety of the corn which is sown, men who manure and cultivate the crop. And Acts of Parliament manifestly have "made corn grow" by providing incentives for men to grow it. They have done it twice on a huge scale in the last twenty-five years and there is nothing new in this; Corn Laws and bounties have a very long history and the Tudors devoted a considerable proportion of their considerable administrative resources to maintaining, for political reasons, the arable acreage of their kingdom. For we err greatly when we regard public authority as a newcomer to the farm. Rigid and detailed control by the manorial court was an integral and essential part of the Open Field System which was ancient when Doomsday Book was compiled, while, for instance, as long ago as the Thirteenth Century the central government was organising and supplementing local arrangements for maintaining the dykes and watercourses of the Fenlands. Indeed, we owe our very field-system to the action of Government, for the commissioners who gave the Enclosure Awards were, at least temporarily, Civil Servants.

The farming countryside, therefore, is not natural; on the contrary, it is highly artificial, one of the great triumphs of man the maker. And among the tools he has used in its creation and maintenance is the organised power of the community which we call the State.

NIGEL HARVEY

SO THEY SAY . . .

THE report of the first productivity team to visit the United States was published last week (September 29). Representing both management and labour, the team gave various reasons why productivity in the American steel founding industry is 50 to 90 per cent higher than it is in Britain. The national dailies were pleasantly varied in the stress they laid on the various reasons.

The Times:

The fundamental causes . . . are stated to be mainly psychological . . . "a widespread degree of productivity-consciousness . . . among all grades of employees, from executive to shop-level . . ."

Daily Telegraph:

[The] report . . . attributes high American output [in the first place] to monetary incentives to owners, investors, and workers . . .

News Chronicle:

WILL-TO-WORK PUTS U.S. STEEL FOUNDING AHEAD

Daily Express:

"YOU MAKE MORE MONEY IF YOU TAKE OFF THE BRAKES"

Daily Mail:

MEN WHO VISITED U.S. SAY IT AGAIN: WORK THE ONLY WAY

Daily Mirror:

A REPORT THAT WILL MAKE INDUSTRY SIT UP

Daily Worker:

SPEED UP—OR BREAD LINE: REPORT ON U.S. METHODS

Daily Graphic:

STEEL MEN POINT "GOLDEN ROAD": DO IT THE AMERICAN WAY—OR NATION GOES DOWN

Daily Herald:

[Higher American output] is partly due, it was found, to things like good factory layout, widespread mechanisation, and economy in layout.

The *Daily Herald*, however, did not go on to give the other reason; in fact it was the only paper which omitted any mention of the worker's part in achieving greater productivity.

Quiet Wedding

If there is one thing calculated to go to the head of a Fleet Street reporter or headline-writer, it is a wedding.

Evening Standard, September 28:

POLICE TELL STEIN GAZERS: "MOVE ON"

Star, September 29 (main headline):

QUEEN KISSES EARL'S BRIDE

Evening Standard, September 29:

THEY'RE MARRIED: EARL'S BRIDE PROMISES TO OBEY

Daily Mirror, September 29:

Outside [a woman] said: "It is lovely to think that an Earl really *CAN* marry a girl from an ordinary family. I think every girl in Britain is saying to herself, 'It could have been me' . . ."

Sunday Pictorial, October 2:

It is little more than a mile from Kensington High Street to Buckingham Palace. But for most people a thousand years lie between their own front doors and the red carpet up the stairs to the private apartments of King George VI.

Daily Express, September 30:

BRIDE ON HONEYMOON PHONES MOTHER

Honeymoon plans: "I suppose we'll stay in Paris for a couple of days," said the earl. He took out his passport . . . looked at it, and added: "We can even go to Russia and Turkey . . ."

Daily Mirror, October 1:

A DAY THEY'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER . . .

At the secluded plum-carpeted restaurant . . . the bill was £2—and, husband-like, the King's nephew discussed it first with his wife. "They have already charged 15 per cent for service. Should I leave anything?" he asked. The Countess laughed, rapidly calculated with her fingers on the tablecloth, and said, "Another 100 francs would be all right . . ."

Which Column Do You Read?

Daily Mail, September 30:

Political correspondent; "Mr. Bevan moved nearer to greater power and real responsibility . . . [His] brilliance . . . in form and manner a duplicate of Lloyd George at his youngest and best . . . complete command of his audience . . ."

Leader headline on Bevan's speech:

ORDINARY RUBBISH

An Extended Skirmish

Daily Express, September 28:

Page 1: Lord Milford Haven served in the Navy before and during the war, winning the D.S.C. for gallantry in a Malta convoy . . .

Page 4: Before and after his brilliant war service—he won the D.S.C. for Arctic valour . . .

AUTOLYCUS

POETRY, THE PUBLIC AND THE CRITIC

A CRITIC is by his nature a go-between. In some periods he can fulfil his nature merely by calling from a window, while in others, as in our own, he has great gulfs to cross. Mr. Mortimer and Mr. Shawe-Taylor have shown in recent articles how awkward these are in the visual arts and in music. What about poetry? It is no good denying that there is a gulf here, too, but I submit that poetry is a special case. A special case because it consists of words, and we all not only use words but use them *poetically*. Ordinary conversation is nearer to lyrical poetry than to cold prose. It is not only that, when we are conversing, we make little effort to be "objective"; it is also that the casual remark is unique in the way that a lyric is unique. This is true of even the most banal remark; for the spoken word has, without any effort, that plasticity which the lyric aims at, and which prose (I mean prosy prose, not Elizabeth Bowen or William Sansom) ignores.

Having posited this too often forgotten resemblance between poet and talker, we must, of course, qualify it. Where the poet (at any rate, the modern poet) works by words alone, the talker usually deals more in sounds than in words, while he also can draw upon facial expression, gestures, etc. Moreover, the talker has his listener *with* him, they share their context (they are both in the 4.30 on a wet day when war has been declared), everything is given, the premisses need not be stated. Now the poet, too, does not wish to waste time over premisses, but he is not in the 4.30 facing his listener, and he cannot say something like "I missed the 4.15 by the skin of my teeth," and be sure that it will ring a bell; nor can he use those innumerable variations of inflection and timing which turn insignificant words into significant speech. So he must compensate. And, as so often happens in so many spheres, the very effort of making up his deficiencies puts him on a higher plane than that on which he found himself deficient. He reaps enormous interest from his own limitations.

The more difficult a game, the greater the technique required of the players. Technique in itself is not valuable, but more often than not it leads to new values, a revelation, a freedom. Poetry is a very difficult game, but its difficulty has usually troubled the players more than the spectators. This is no longer so—and here we come to the crux of this article. Few of the spectators of any sport know all of its finer points, but most of them do get the hang of what is going on; there is a certain broad pattern which cannot be missed, and they are willing to lump the subtleties. Most of the world's poetry shows an equally broad pattern, though it often was not what really interested the poets. To-day the broad pattern is frequently missing. But why should a poet dispense with a broad pattern, and, if he does, how can the reader respond to him?

The pattern of a poem involves both form and content; the content must "make sense," and the shape must be recognizable as shape. But make sense to whom? Recognizable by whom? There are some poems—and they may be very good ones—whose pattern is too subtle for any but a few to grasp. There are other alleged poems which have neither sense nor shape (in any legitimate meaning of those words), and which, therefore, just are not poems. But to decide what is a legitimate meaning of either word needs

very delicate analysis. Every poet knows that poetic sense is not the same thing as common sense or logical sense. And every poet knows that poetic shape is not a mere matter of mechanical symmetry. But does the reader know this? He does—when he himself is poeticising, i.e., talking; he will then use all sorts of hidden allusions, double meanings, irony, hyperboles, and fancy variations from baby-talk to "meaningless" swear-words; he will also play many tricks with rhythm. But, once he starts reading, he wants to be spoon-fed; he demands that poetry should be simpler than talk. And the reason for this is patent: the poet is not in the 4.30. It is a reason, however, that has been exaggerated; the poet is not in the 4.30 but he *is* somewhere round in the community. Given a community, however loose a one, there should not be an unbridgeable gulf between its poets and its readers. Gulf there is—in spite of the fact that broad patterns are coming back—but is it unbridgeable?

It should not be, if the "average reader" were educated. But he will not be *poetically* educated until we have responsible critics. As it is, most critics pass by on the other side. But then most critics, unlike creative artists, are snobs and will only preach to the converted. This is true not only of the æsthetic critic who prefers to leave the "average reader" on the other side of a gulf, but also of the Marxist critic who says that nothing can be done about the gulf until there has been a revolution. In fact, the Marxist attribution of the gulf to social and economic causes is true, but only partly true—which means it is partly false. There are some poets who are "difficult"—and therefore anathema to the "average reader"—because, feeling out of touch with the contemporary world, they have deliberately turned their backs on it. There are other poets who are "difficult" (e.g., W. H. Auden) because they are only too interested in the contemporary world and are trying to assimilate very difficult and complex bits of it (that world, after all, includes Freud just as Shakespeare's included Machiavelli). So much for difficulty of content. "Difficulty" of form can similarly be referred sometimes to "escapism," but more often to the sheer fact, which has little to do with social or economic causes, that the English language has been in use a very long time, and that a vast amount of poetry has been written in it already. A poet's words must at all costs come fresh.

While we need not agree with Mr. Eliot that "poets in our civilisation, as it exists at present, must be difficult," we must concede that a good deal of poetry to-day *will* be difficult, whether we like it or not. But here the critic can help—not that he often does. While it is not for the poet to keep stating his premisses, few poets to-day can assume, as Homer and even Shakespeare could assume, that his public already knows them. And, since it is no good crying out for a tribal uniformity when we are no longer a tribe, it is the critic's job to point out to the public what angle a poet is writing from and what he is trying to do. But the big critic, who writes whole books, is often plugging some perverse general theory of poetry which leaves no room for seven poets out of ten. The little critic, who writes book reviews, seems compelled, partly by lack of space, partly by laziness, to prefer the snap generalisation, the ready-made label, to any decent down-to-earth analysis.

Twenty years ago Professor I. A. Richards exposed the pitfalls that trapped his Cambridge undergraduates when they passed judgments on poetry. Those pits are as wide as ever—"stock responses," the obsession with "message," etc.—and even professional critics fall easily, not to say happily, into them. In reviewing poetry myself I have fallen into such pits; I have also consciously yielded to various temptations. This has proved to me how hard it is to be either an efficient or an honest go-between. I have had it proved again by reviews of my own poems. According to my reviewers, taken collectively (and I am confining myself to more or less favourable reviews), I am a writer they can place quite simply: I am a surprisingly feminine, essentially masculine poet, whose gift is primarily lyrical and basically satirical, swayed by and immune to politics, with and without a religious sense, and I am technically slapdash and technically meticulous, with a predilection for flat and halting and lilting and Swinburnian rhythms, and I have a personal and impersonal approach, with a remarkably wide and consistently narrow range, and I have developed a good deal and I have not developed at all. Most living poets have been similarly treated by reviewers. Can something be wrong somewhere?

Of course something is wrong; the critics may or may not have taste (and, as Mr. Eliot has said, "genuine taste is always imperfect taste"), but very few of them have any critical standards. And they will not acquire such standards till they remember that poetry is made with *words*. For the critic of poetry has one great advantage over the critics of music and painting words are not notes of music or blobs of pigment, and they could not (*pace* some lunatics) be abstract even if they tried (though they do, of course, have a sound or colour which is distinct from their dictionary meaning). There is therefore some relation between words as used by a poet and words as used by the public, which includes the critic. There is also a relation between verse rhythm and speech rhythm. The poet introduces new subtleties into both rhythm and meaning (the two interact on each other), but he is still only using with a new precision tools which lie ready to everyone's hand. And he is using them for an end which is as much social as personal; as Christopher Caudwell wrote, "the instinctive ego of art is the common man into which we retire to establish contact with our fellows." The critic then must start by remembering that words are a means of communication. What is the poet trying to communicate? And does he bring it off? To answer these questions may involve construing the prose "meaning" of the poem or analysing its prosody; it will certainly involve hard work. When the critic has thus discussed what kind of poem he is dealing with, and whether it is good of his kind, he can then, if he likes, go on to a third and more difficult question: what is the value of this kind of poem?

But a word of warning. Many poets to-day, whatever they may call themselves, are anarchists. There is a place for such, but there is not much place for the anarchist critic. Here I agree with Mr. Eliot who, in 1923, stood out against Mr. Middleton Murry's championship of the Inner Voice. Anarchists should sing but they should not speak. "Criticism's central job," as Mr. E. M. Forster said lately, "seems to be education through precision." The "average reader" (who is not the same person as the "average man") is far more educable than intellectuals think. But neither salon shibboleths nor Inner Voice gush will help him. A poetry reviewer would be more use if he saved some space from generalisation and prejudice to discuss such preciser points as the relation between a poet's sentence structure and verse pattern, or his use of the curtain line or his variation of stresses. He must indicate to the reader where to look for the *order* in the poem. But, above all, though he can only do this approximately, he must try to suggest the reason for this order: what is the poet getting at? For it may very well be something that concerns the public, too.

LOUIS MACNEICE

THE END OF THE RECORD

THE news went around the poorhouse that there was a man with a recording van in the grounds. He was picking up old stories and songs.

"And they say that he would give you a five-shilling piece into your hand for two verses of an old song," said Thomas Hunter, an old man from Coomacoppal, in West Kerry, forgetting that five-shilling pieces were no longer in fashion. "Or for a story, if you had a good one."

"What sort of stories would them be?" Michael Kivlehan asked sceptically. He was from the barony of Forth and Bargy in County Wexford and had been in the poorhouse for eleven years.

"Any story at all only it to be an old story and a good story. A story about the fairies, or about ghosts, or about the way people lived long ago."

"And what do he do with 'um when he have 'um?"

"Hasn't he a phonograph? And doesn't he given them out over the wireless? And doesn't everyone in Ireland be listening to them?"

"I wonder now," said Michael Kivlehan, "would he give me five shillings for the Headless Horseman and the Coacha Bowr?"

Thomas Hunter sighed.

"One time I had a grand story about Finn MacCool and the Scotch Giant. But it is gone from me. And I'd be getting my fine five-shilling piece into my fist this minute if I could only announce it to him."

The two old men sat on the sides of their beds and tried to remember stories. But it was other things they remembered and they forgot all about the man outside who had set them thinking of their childhood.

The doctor had taken the collector into the women's ward to meet Mary Creegan. She was sitting up in bed, alone in the long room; all the other women were out in the warm sun. As the two men walked up the bare floor the collector was trailing a long black cable from a microphone in his hand, and the doctor was telling him that she came from a place called Faill-a-ghleanna in West Cork.

"She should have lots of stories because her husband was famous for them. After he died she went a bit airy so they had to bring her to us. 'Twas a bit tough on her at first. Sixty years in the one cottage—and then to finish up here." They stood beside her bed. "I brought a visitor to see you, Mary," he said in a loud voice.

She did not appear to see them. She was humming happily to herself. Her bony fingers were wound about an ancient rosary-beads. Her white hair floated up above a face as tiny and as wrinkled as a forgotten crab-apple. All her teeth were gone so that her face was as broad as it was long: it was as if the midwife had pressed the baby's chin and forehead between thumb and forefinger. The doctor gently laid his hand under the tiny chin and turned her face towards him. She smiled.

"Put down the kettle and wet the tay," she ordered.

The doctor sat on the bed; so did the collector.

"'Tis down, Mary, and two eggs in the pot,

This poor man here is after coming a long way to talk to you. He's tired out."

She turned and looked at the stranger. Encouraged by a brightening spark in the depths of her eyes he turned aside and murmured quietly into the microphone: "Reggy? Recording ten seconds from . . . Now."

"It's a bad road," she said. "Ask Jamesy is he keeping that divil of a cow out of the cabbage."

"She's all right," the doctor cried into her ear. "Jamesy is watching her. Be talking to us while we're waiting for the tay. You told me one time you saw a ghost. Is that true?"

She looked out of the window and her eyes opened and narrowed like a fish's gills as if they were sucking something in from the blue sky outside. The collector stealthily approached her chin with the microphone.

"Ghosts? Ayeh! Ha! My ould divil of a tailor is for ever and always talkin' about 'um. But, sure, I wouldn't heed him. Bummin' and boashtin' he is from morning to night and never a needle to be shtuck in the shtuff. Where is he? Why don't you ask him to be talking to you about ghoshts?"

The doctor looked across the bed at the collector and raised his eyebrows.

"Maybe you don't believe in them yourself?" he mocked.

"I do *not* believe in 'um. But they're there. Didn't I hear tell of 'um from them that saw 'um? Aye, and often. And often! Aye," still collecting her thought from the sky above the bakehouse chimney. "Wasn't it that way the night Father Regan died? Huh! They called him Father Regan, but he was not a right priesht. He was silenced for some wrong thing he did when he was a young priest, and they sent him to Faill-a-ghleanna to be doing penance for it. When his time came to die it was a bad, shtormy night. And when he sent for the parish priest to hear his confession the priest could not come. And that was a hard thing to do, for no man should refuse the dying. And they sent another messenger for the priest, and still the priest could not come. 'Oh,' said Father Regan, 'I'm lost now.' So they sent a third messenger. And for the third time the priest could not come. And on his way back wasn't the messenger shtopped on the road by a woman? It was Father Regan's own mother. 'Go back,' says she, 'and if the candles by his bed light up,' says she, 'of their own accord,' says she, 'he is saved.' And the messenger went back, and Father Regan gave wan look at him and he closed his eyes for the last time. With that all the people went on their knees. And they began to pray. If they did, there were three candles at the head of the dead priest. And didn't the one beside the window light up? And after a little while the candle beside the fire-clevvy lit up. And they went on praying. And the wind and the shtorm screaming about the house, and they watching the wick of the last candle. And, bit by bit, the way you'd blow up a fire with a bellows, didn't the candle over the priest's head light up until the whole room was like daylight."

The old woman's voice suddenly became bright and hard.

"Isn't that tay ready a-yet? Domn and blosht it ye'll have them eggs like bullets." She looked alertly at the two men. "Where am I? Where's Jamesy? What are ye doing to me?"

The doctor held her wrist. Her eyes faded. She sank back heavily.

"I thought," she wailed, "that it was how I saw a great brightness."

The collector spoke one word into the microphone. The old woman had fainted. Overcome with regrets he began to apologise, but the doctor waved his hand at him.

"Excited. I'll send up the sister to give her an injection. Sometimes she loves to talk about old times. It does her good."

They went out of the empty ward, the cable trailing softly. They passed the male ward. Michael Kivlehan and Thomas Hunter were sitting on their beds. As the doctor led the way downstairs, he said, "When that generation goes it will be all over. Wait for me outside. There are a couple more. You might get bits and scraps from them."

The engineer put his head out of the van and said, in the gloomy voice of all engineers, "That might come through all right."

When the doctor came out again they sat with a middle-aged man from Wicklow, named Fenelon. He had been on the roads until arthritis crippled him. When he counted the years he spoke in Urdu. He had scraps of the tinker's language which is called Shelta. He said:

"I often walked from Dublin to Puck, and that's a hundred miles, without ever disturbing anything but a hare or a snipe. I'd make for Ross, and then cross to Callan, and by Slievenamon west to the Galtees."

He did not see the microphone; he did not see his visitors; as the needle softly cut the disc he was seeing only the mountainy sheep that looked at him with slitted eyes, a man as shaggy as themselves.

They moved on to an old woman who sang a love-song for them in a cracked voice. She said she had learned it in Chicago. She gave them a poem of twelve verses about a voyage to the South Seas. They were finishing a disc with a very old man from Carlow when the sister came out and hastily beckoned to the doctor. As they folded up the cable he came back. He said, with a slow shake of the head:

"It's old Mary. I must leave ye. But ye have the best of them. The rest is only the shakings of the bag."

When they had thanked him and were driving away the collector said, eagerly:

"Pull up when we're out of the town. I want to play back those discs."

They circled up and out of the town until its murmur was so faint that they could hear only the loudest cries of the playing children. There they played back the discs, and as they leaned towards the loud-speaker and the black record circled smoothly they could see, sideways through the window, the smoke of the hollow town. The last voice was Mary Creegan's.

". . . and after a while the candle by the fire-clevvy lit up. And they went on praying. And the wind and the shtorm screaming about the house, and they watching the wick of the last candle. And, bit by bit, the way you'd blow up a fire with a bellows, didn't the candle over the priest's head light up until the whole room was like daylight . . . Isn't that tay ready a-yet? Domn and blosht it ye'll have them eggs like bullets . . . Where am I? Where's Jamesy? What are ye doing to me? . . . I thought that it was how I saw a great brightness."

The listeners relaxed. Then from the record came a low, lonely cry.

The fluting of a curlew over moorland. It fluted sadly once again, farther away; and for a third time, almost too faint to be heard. Many times the two men played back those last few inches of disc. Every time they heard the bittern wailing over the mountains.

It was dusk now. They laid the voices in a black box and drove away. Now and again the collector glanced over his shoulder; in his ears that bittern boom. Just before they topped the hill, and the antennæ of their headlamps began to probe the winding descent to the next valley, they looked back for the last time. The palace lights of the poorhouse had hurried in the night.

SEAN O'FAOLAIN

The Arts and Entertainment

THE OLYMPIANS

THE large-scale new opera which opened the autumn season at Covent Garden has music by Arthur Bliss and a libretto by J. B. Priestley. It is based on an idea with great possibilities. The gods of Olympus, immortal though no longer divine, wander the roads of Europe for ever as a troupe of strolling players; every hundred years or so, for a few brief hours, they recover their ancient power and splendour. The action, picturesquely set in the south of France in 1836, has been designed so as to form a single curve culminating in the midsummer night's madness of the second act: crescendo, apotheosis, decrescendo. An excellent subject, though better suited, I suspect, to the demands of ballet; to make an opera, it needs to be either elaborated and fantasticated in the airy style of *Coq d'Or*, or else provided with a strong cross-current of human intrigue. Mr. Priestley has abjured all magic or fantasy beyond that contained in the original idea; instead, he has "humanised" the subject—but, as it seems to me, in too sketchy and half-hearted a fashion. His leading humans—the wicked *buffo* rentier (Howell Glynne), his ingénue daughter (Shirley Russell), and a romantic poet, implausibly named Hector de Florac (James Johnston)—they are all the dimmest and dustiest of stock figures. They have no time for comic imbroglio; their behaviour is at all moments precisely predictable; and during the crucial scene of the apotheosis they quietly fade out, so that the drama becomes a pageant.

Libretto-writing is a queer trade, of which we do not possess (how should we?) any experienced English practitioners. Yet we need them badly, because our language as a vehicle for music presents some peculiar difficulties. Long sentences with subordinate clauses may be awkward in any language, but special problems are created by such English polysyllables as "absolutely" or "humiliation," which have one or two dimly accented syllables surrounded by an unsettable huddle of "-er" sounds. Neither Bliss nor Priestley seems altogether alive to such difficulties as these; consequently much of the text of *The Olympians* remains inaudible, and much of what is heard sounds curiously like a conventional operatic translation. "She is the daughter of a rich old fellow called Lavatte, who won't let her speak to me, but her enchanting eyes flashed the words of a thousand volumes at me." No composer could find a natural and convincing vocal line for that sentence; it is ironical that the author, who would never perpetrate anything so stilted in a straight play, should have thought it just the thing for music. When he abandons romantic prose in favour of near-poetry he is more successful; his short lines have little music of their own (very few librettos have), but they make a satisfactory basis for aria, declamation and chorus.

For most of the first act, Arthur Bliss lives up to the expectations which it was only natural to form. He has a keen dramatic sense, great facility, and uncommon skill in orchestration and in the handling of themes (particularly ingenious are his shifts of key); and he flings himself into the new adventure with characteristic gusto, inventing striking phrases and motives and bandying them about between orchestra and

stage in a highly exhilarating style; furthermore, he writes well for the voice, and shows an opera-composer's instinct for the moment of repose—for example in that warm, sunny melody which sings out from the cellos while the curé and the landlady of *The Golden Duck* sit down to their glass of brandy. The mock-rehearsal scene between hero and heroine was less interesting, but the entry of the bedraggled Olympians was a brilliant creation of musico-dramatic atmosphere, and their gradual realisation that the divine fire is once again about to touch them brought down the curtain on an effectively uncanny note of expectation. The first act of *The Olympians* was very much alive: not alive in every detail, but alive as a whole.

The night music which opens the second act is romantically evocative, but a long aria for a night-watchman damps our spirits: night-watchmen are "atmosphere," capital value for a slow phrase or two, but they mustn't be encouraged to ramble on about the Napoleonic wars. A pretty cantilena (with cello obbligato) for the heroine is followed by a love duet which, though lyrical and full of opportunities for the singers, is deficient in character. Whereupon the big moment of the opera arrives—the metamorphosis of the players into their divine counterparts: Mercury, Diana, Mars, Bacchus, Venus, finally Jupiter. This scene should have been astonishing, intoxicating, overwhelming; but it was nothing of the sort. Various subsidiary reasons contributed to the disappointing result (for instance, two of the male gods were feebly sung, and the production and setting—in contrast to the first act—were unimaginative); but the trouble lay deeper than that. The music was galumphing where it should have been fleet-footed and magical; and it was laid out in an unfortunate scheme. Each divinity was introduced as a separate episode or "number," complete with attendant chorus of male or female guests, who stormed on to the stage in a rapturous state, only to find that there was no room left to do anything except wave their arms, sing lustily and sit down. Each of these incursions came to an end with a full stop instead of a comma, so that the audience was given time to wonder whose turn it would be next, and the excitement had to be worked up all over again from scratch: it was like sitting through a bound volume of six Novello cantatas in a T. C. Fairbairn production by the Royal Choral Society. Occasionally Lavatte shouted for the police, and once or twice the lovers were heard complaining (with some justice) of neglect; finally Jupiter (who looked like the Commendatore) got bored with the proceedings and hurled a truly Olympian thunderbolt—upon which the curtain fell. Apart from that thunderbolt, how tame they had been, the lordly ones!

From such a second act no opera could recover. The third act opens with a passionate B flat minor lament for Diana which struck me as the best thing in the whole score; it was sung with nobility and brilliance by Margherita Grandi, who provided most of the vocal pleasure of the evening. But the plot collapsed into a fictitious exorcizing of the heathen gods by the curé: a device which had manifestly failed to stimulate the composer's imagination, so that he had to fall back on declamation interspersed by loud chords on the brass. Only here and there in the two later acts does he display the power and vivacity of the opening; elsewhere he falls back on romantic formulas, which he handles with considerable skill but without the glow of conviction.

It has always been rare for an opera-composer to do himself full justice at his first attempt: Britten and Mascagni are the exceptions; few to-day could name, and fewer still have heard, the first operas of Wagner, Verdi, Puccini or Strauss, not to mention the early nineteenth-century Italians. Unfortunately, modern conditions have conspired (in England more than anywhere else) to make it increasingly difficult for opera-composers to gain experience by seeing their immature efforts performed. The cost of production mounts, and the technical complexity of modern music keeps a composer at work on his score for several years (instead of a few months, like Rossini); furthermore, we have in England no provincial operatic establishments as a trying-out ground; it is London or nothing. This is an extremely unhealthy state of affairs, for which I can see no easy remedy. To expect a regular diet of new masterpieces at Covent Garden is as unreasonable as to expect every new play in Shaftesbury Avenue to be as good as Shakespeare or Ibsen; yet new plays and new operas must be regularly produced, or the rare masterpiece will never turn up. If Bliss, with his brilliant gifts, had written half a dozen earlier operas and seen them all produced, then *The Olympians* might have turned out more happily, or at least more pointfully. As it is, it falls between two stools, showing little trace of the distinguished hand which wrote the Clarinet Quintet, and unable to compete with the broadly effective professional theatricalism of Giordano or Eugen d'Albert.

DESMOND SHAWE-TAYLOR

RADIO NOTES

THE Third Programme is undoubtedly a blessing, but it is as well not to be too complacent about it. In education, hundreds of schools that were formerly elementary schools are now called secondary modern schools: the buildings are the same as they were before the change; so are the staffs, and the children; all that has been altered is the name. So, when one looks back to the great days of the Home Service, in the later years of the war, and compares it with the present Third Programme, one sometimes thinks that perhaps only a name has been changed. This is not wholly fair, of course. In music the Third does us proud in a way in which the old Home Service never could; and talks series like that now current on Goethe go quite beyond its scope. Yet it remains true that many programme items which are now automatically Third would once have found their place, without anyone rising to denounce them as highbrow, in the Home Service. Such feature series as *New Judgment* and *Return Journey* began in the Home Service, and have not been noticeably affected by their elevation to the Third; and it is as well to remember that Mr. Sackville West's *The Rescue* and Mr. MacNeice's *The Dark Tower*, to say nothing of *The Careerist*, *Christopher Columbus* and *Sunbeams in His Hat*, made their initial appearances before the Third was born. Good as the Third is in itself, I don't think it can be questioned that its existence has meant a steep decline in Home Service standards. Home contains excellent things, but for the most part it now appears to interpret its function as competing with the Light Programme, which, where sheer entertainment is concerned, does the job much better.

These reflections are prompted by two recent programmes I have listened to. One was Mr. Isaiah Berlin's *The Anglo-American Predicament*. I doubt if a more important talk has been broadcast for many months; it deserved the widest possible audience; and it was put out in the Third Programme. Before the Third was born it would have found its place quite naturally in the Home Service, I imagine after the 9 o'clock news. Presumably Mr. Berlin's almost legendary reputation is considered essentially a Third Programme reputation. It may be said that nothing has been lost, that listeners who wish to hear Mr. Berlin can as easily tune in to the Third as to the Home. This is not, in fact, true, and won't be until next March; but even if the Third were as readily available to all listeners as the Home, it would still be perverse, it seems to me, to banish a talk of such importance to the relative obscurity of the Third. For the Third sets out to cater to a minority, and the majority, which is not wholly stupid, is uncomfortably aware of this. In consequence, it misses much that it might otherwise enjoy. But simply because the Third is a service for minorities it is plain that the proper place for the discussion of problems of urgent public interest, such as that Mr. Berlin was dealing with, is the Home Service.

The other programme was Dr. Bronowski's dramatic poem for five voices, *The Journey to Japan*. First appearing in the Third last year, it was presented in a slightly different version in the Home Service last week. In my view it is a most impressive work, the eloquent expression, in verse subtly adapted to radio, of a humanism refreshing because of its very rarity in these days. Mr. Gittings's production seemed to me first-rate, and the poetry was quite beautifully spoken by a cast in which Mr. Cecil Trouncer, Miss Annabel Maule and Mr. Alan Wheatley were pre-eminent. One would have heard *The Journey to Japan* with pleasure in any programme; to hear it in the Home Service was a double pleasure, for it was as if the Home had suddenly returned to its traditions of four and five years ago.

Finally, a brief note on two plays. Mr. Dickinson's translation of the *Pseudolus* of Plautus, in the Third, made a most entertaining hour or so. Mr. Bernard Miles played the title part with agreeable gusto; and Mr. Hotchkis's music was continually witty. Then, the Light Programme is to be commended for its presentation of Mr. Ross Williamson's *Queen Elizabeth*. The play came to life superbly well, thanks to its own intrinsic merit, firm production by Mr. Archie Campbell, good acting by a strong supporting cast, and an incomparable performance by Dame Edith Evans as Elizabeth. It was enchanting in its range and power. Unless from Dame Edith herself, I do not expect ever to hear better acting at the microphone.

WILLIAM SALTER

THE MOVIES

"Liebelei," at the Everyman
"Au Grand Balcon," at the Rialto
"Bagarres," at the Rialto
"The Chiltern Hundreds" at the Odeon, Marble Arch

ONE is grateful to the adventurous Everyman Cinema at Hampstead for having unearthed a copy of Max Ophuls' seventeen-year-old *Liebelei*, even though the copy is old and faded and the visual charm of its gentle evocation of Vienna under snow in the winter of 1910 has been partially lost. The dim screen accentuates the barrier of time between ourselves and the story, which seems to take place at one remove. Schnitzler's tale, which provides the basis, tells of Fritz and Christine, a romantic and melancholy Guards officer and an innocent young girl hoping for an audition at the Opera, who fall in love; they are happy only for a short time, because Fritz is overtaken by the shadow of an old affair, becomes involved in a duel and is shot. The episode, treated with light sympathy and irony, is rather similar in mood to Autant-Lara's exquisite *Douce*, shown here a year or two ago. There is the same little tragedy of innocence overwhelmed by experience, and a nostalgic picture of a vanished formal society; when the lovers drive on a sleigh-ride through the magical snow-laden countryside beyond Vienna, landscapes and settings seem as artificial as conventions. Characters exist almost in the realm of legend—the shy, boyish Fritz, the sheltered Christine, the charming dissolute officer who is Fritz's best friend, and his light-headed little blonde Mitzi: traditional also is the contrasting portrait of a cold and discontented family of aristocrats. The loveless Baron avenges his wife's dishonour without passion, without personal humiliation, for the sake of a rigid social custom.

The supple technique, delicate feeling for its period (which Ophuls created again in *Sarajevo*) and sensitive playing make this minor film unusually touching and appealing. Wolfgang Liebeneiner and Magda Schneider as the lovers, Willy Eichberger (now Carl Esmond) and Luise Ullrich as gallant and mistress, have all the authentic graceful airs. Amongst the others one notices an excellent performance by Paul Hoerbiger

(the porter in *The Third Man*) as Christine's father, and by Gustaf Gruendgens as the Baron.

The two new continental films in London this week are of little consequence. The Rialto, having flirted with French films for the past two years, reopens with *Au Grand Balcon*, directed by Henri Decoin, a solid, inoffensive pot-boiler about heroic aviators in the Twenties, very competently made and acted by Pierre Fresnay and Georges Marchal. The Polytechnic, for the second film of its new season, has misguidedly imported *Bagarres*, directed by Henri Calef. This laborious rural sex-drama has for its heroine that perennial trouble-maker, the local girl with a magnetic fascination, who makes trouble with almost every peasant between the ages of 20 and 60 in the district before she finds her true love (a charcoal-burner).

The Chiltern Hundreds is no sooner off the stage of the Vaudeville than on the screen of the Odeon, Marble Arch. The story has its appeal—a member of the landed gentry stands for Parliament as a Tory, is turned down, tries again as a Socialist, but is defeated by his butler, who gets in as a Tory—but the opportunities for real satire are not taken. It is, in fact, simply traditional domestic comedy trimmed with electioneering jokes; and its jolly values are upheld by A. E. Matthews and Marjorie Fielding, who one now takes for granted in any play or film affectionately delineating the antics of the British middle class.

On the whole, the Film Societies promise some of the most interesting programmes for the next few months. The New London Film Society (4 St. James's Place, S.W.1), which meets at the Scala Theatre, has begun a new season with Pabst's *Joyless Street*, and promises Renoir's *La Chienne* in a week's time. The London Film Club (14 Forty Lane, Wembley) reopens at the Royal Empire Society Cinema, Northumberland Avenue, this week with *Le Million* and Renoir's last French *La Règle du Jeu*.

GAVIN LAMBERT

"Folies Bergère," at the London Hippodrome

The Rue Richer has come to Cranbourn Street, by way of the Birmingham Watch Committee. The crowds goggling at the pictures outside the Hippodrome, lured by a reputation, will eagerly push into this revue, past the *flic* on duty outside. Once in, they will enjoy themselves, for even in an emasculated form this revue is bright entertainment. It makes up in colour for its lack of good comedy, its mediocre singing and its ragged dancing. The imported sets and costumes, in fact, are better than the performers they adorn. Marqueez, who has almost no costume, is an exception, dancing with delightful grace. It is a pity that Michael Bentine, who has an ingenious comedy routine, chooses to end it with a puerile gibe at Paul Robeson's racial characteristics. In all, a show less gaudy or glamorous than genteel.

POEM

To us, goddess, who are in barbary
Looking across unfortunate waters, hearing
All round those wordless voices of machines,
To us be kind, be good to us, your children,
Lead us across the wilderness, protect us
From tricks of time, exorcise for us
Moping demons, and cast for us
A fair horoscope when we set out

For we intend, goddess, to make a journey
By land and sea, and we can see no end
In our life nor in any life we know
Of children, or children's children, undescried
And unconceived. And so please grant us grace
To give life

And to have life, through you, in words and forms
That will enact by generation,
By genital and scriptural tradition,
The story of our going.

CHARLES MADGE

Correspondence

CAPITAL GAINS TAX

SIR,—In your last issue you say that it is a scandal that stock exchange profits are taxed in America and untaxed in Labour Britain and at the same time you imply that the speculative activity in Throgmorton Street following devaluation was immoral.

Now I have been reading your journal for many years because I liked its generally human outlook, common sense and fairness. If I object to your above statement (and previous similar ones on financial matters) it is not because your journal supports the Labour Government, but because I have the impression that the statement was due to a wrong appraisal of the actual position.

If the Government could see a useful purpose in a capital gains tax, other than a purely political one, it would have imposed such a tax long ago. In America stock exchange profits are taxed, but stock exchange losses can be offset against profits and other earnings. I assume the opinion of the Government is about the same as mine: Over a period the bulk of the speculators have not been making money on the stock exchange allowing for expenses, and the administrative costs of the tax may exceed the revenue. I admit there are, of course, always a few shrewd speculators who operate with great benefit unless, after some time, they lose their head. Instead of the tax on stock exchange speculation we have the 2 per cent. stamp duty on each transfer in registered stocks, and I could imagine that this weighs more heavily on stock exchange business than a gambling tax would on balance.

This to the technical side. Now to the moral one: I cannot see any difference between a man who bought and sold shares on the stock exchange with a profit and one who bought a house before the war for £1,000 and now sells it for £3,000, but I have, so far, not seen any objection to the latter in your paper. Following devaluation, prices of American, Swiss and other so-called currency securities were, of course, automatically adjusted to those quoted abroad. Our own Ministry raised prices for base metals, so what was wrong with people buying gold shares, because the companies in South Africa after being for ten years in a jam are now likely to make some money? What harm has been done to the community by such speculative activity? Whilst the cost of living and the value of real property and fixed assets in this country have about doubled since prewar, the index for industrial shares now is below that of 1936, and whilst the gold share index in 1935 was 250, it is now only 125, which is not surprising, as the industry got no price increase since 1939 for its product until the recent devaluation of the £.

I do not assume that you advocate the abolition of all private property in the Sterling Area, or the nationalisation of risky ventures like gold mines. But as long as the Government feels that a private sector in trade, industry and mining is unavoidable, a stock exchange must exist, the companies must have reasonable scope for profits commensurate with the risk they run, and there must be a market for the securities which is not affected by criticism due to insufficient study of the actual position.

36/38 Cornhill, E.C.3. WERNER ROSENMEYER

ATOMIC PEACE

SIR,—I am disappointed with the negative attitude of your article on "Atomic Peace" last week. It contains no positive suggestion except that the U.S.S.R. should "do something peaceful" by in effect appeasing Yugoslavia—as though, when it was friendly with Yugoslavia, Britain and the U.S.A were not pursuing their cold war just as vigorously; it accuses Vyshinsky, without a scrap of evidence, of justifying "military pressure" by Russia; and it congratulates the U.S.A. on "doing something peaceful" by double-crossing us in selling to Russia a small quantity of goods that it would not allow us to deliver ourselves.

But surely the new situation created by the disclosure that the Soviet Union has long had the atomic bomb is too good to be dealt with in this fashion! This is a hopeful and important moment and both the British and the American peoples should be encouraged to demand a serious response to the peace proposals of Mr. Vyshinsky.

When you assert that his appeal "sounds not like peacemaking but like Russian propaganda" you are surely the victim of the worst type of American propaganda, whose technique is to pretend as long as possible that the Russians offer nothing, and, when that is no longer possible, to dismiss it as propaganda, as if a label disposed of it.

We must shake off this technique and take the proposals seriously. At the worst, if they were not serious, why not call their bluff? At the best, we might blunder into peace.

I do not share your doubts as to the Russians ever believing that America would in fact destroy her atom bombs if she agreed to inspection. The Russians may well have thought that the American ruling class were not so stupidly murderous that they would reject every opportunity to get rid on reasonable terms of a Frankenstein that threatened to bring their civilisation to an end.

Nor do I agree that the Western Powers had no confidence in the U.S.S.R. ever accepting satisfactory methods of inspection. The far-reaching offers of the Soviet Union—well described by Professor Blackett in his book on atomic energy last year, and recently restated in Mr. Rothstein's letter to *The Times* of September 28—are surely sufficient to be at least tried out by any statesman with a genuine desire to reduce the danger of war, if he were not inhibited by internal or external political or economic pressure. Welcome or not, the U.S.S.R., ever since 1946, has been plainly stating that it would accept United Nations inspectors on the same terms as other countries.

I am still more in disagreement with your view that after such a great step forward as the elimination of the atomic bomb the arms race would still continue. This is the very echo of the sophistries with which Lord Cushendun, speaking for a Tory Government, opposed Litvinov's disarmament proposals at Geneva in 1928. It is moreover pure defeatism. The arms race—a one-sided "race," for there is no evidence that the U.S.S.R. is speeding up its armaments in response to the mad rush to murder of the U.S.A.—will find its stimuli lessened with any increase of co-operation anywhere; (we have already seen confessions by such leading statesmen as John Foster Dulles of the need for "artificial alarm"!). But it will surely tail off rapidly as soon as the open war-drivers of the U.S.A. realise that they have no special advantage such as the atom bomb seemed to provide. In any case the Soviet Government has revived its own—and President Hoover's—proposals of 1932 for a percentage cut in the armaments of the five Great Powers. Why not support that if prospects of a continued arms race should still remain after atom bombs are eliminated? Who is stopping you? The sane and decent American people realise that the Soviet Union is not in any sense working for war. For those who will reflect, there is convincing evidence that it is not. Let me give one good item:—

No power to-day can start an aggressive world war until it has conditioned its people by many, many months of sabre-rattling propaganda, as the U.S.A. has long been doing; it is indisputable that the U.S.S.R. has not even begun this foul work, but has on the contrary been encouraging a vast peace movement—the recent Congress in Moscow was one example—which would make it difficult for it to reverse the engines at all quickly. The only possible inference is that it does not want a war, and could not start one if it did. Is that not in itself enough evidence?

The situation calls for a positive attitude. We should all face the fact—and act on it—that the rulers of the U.S.A., dragging others with them, are devoting a high proportion of the vast wealth of their country to the establishment, manufacture, and maintenance of bases, aeroplanes, guns, bombs, arms, satellites, and war hysteria (and temporarily taking the sharpest edge off their slump by doing so). On the other hand, the U.S.S.R. is spending only a small portion of its budget on arms, is not conditioning the minds of its peoples for war, and is bending every effort to great schemes of reconstruction and development which war alone could stop.

If we in Britain raise a mass campaign on this platform for a workable compromise on atomic weapons—simultaneous agreements to prohibit them, to destroy existing stocks, and to institute rigorous international inspection, for which both sides have declared themselves prepared—we could make our Government listen and could bring the State Department off its high horse. That would be the beginning of a real chance of peace. D. N. PRITT

House of Commons.

PROFESSOR BERNAL

SIR,—Surely Prof. Bernal suffers from two difficulties: he is not in proper control of his words, and he is apt to take a small, solid, attractive fact as proving far more than it has any right to. If one is going in for politics it is essential to use words with some accuracy, though no doubt Prof. Bernal, like Humpty Dumpty, pays them extra for overtime.

He says Tito is " quite openly in the pay of American bankers." Does this mean that there is an American loan to Yugoslavia? It is going to be a wonderful muddle if every country which has taken a loan from any other country is, through that, in the pay of its bankers. I seem to remember, some time in the twenties, buying a £2 Soviet bond, covered with hammers and sickles, through my bankers, M. Coutts and Co. Are M. Coutts and Co. enslaving the Soviet Union?

" Our culture is sinking into a precious state of pessimism." Come off it! Or stop reading the Roman Catholic gang and the Angst boys. Try some of the Scots writers. We aren't pessimistic in spite of the fact that, according to our nationalists, we are hopelessly in the pay of the English.

" War . . . is a necessity to the directors of industry." I can think of a few industries for which war may, with luck—that is to say, with no direct hits—be profitable; but a lot more where it is obviously disastrous. Surely, here are three phrases which are used because they have a little truth in them, but the words have been allowed out and have arrayed themselves into forceful but rather meaningless clichés.

I am sure there is a great deal that is extremely striking in Moscow. They may well be ahead of us in building; we are still for the most part working in a debased traditionalism. Are they ahead of Denmark and Sweden? I am sure they want peace. But why should Prof. Bernal assume that because they want peace other people all want war? It is unscientific of him. Why, when he was over there and had this wonderful opportunity of talking to the people in the U.S.S.R. as so many of us would love to do, did he not tell them that we in this country are getting ahead with scientific research quite unconnected with war, that we are producing first-rate poetry and pictures, that we are going ahead over education and health, and that, as soon as the mass of people are used to social security, we are likely to have a new kind of mass culture?

But perhaps he did say so. I can quite imagine that he did. I expect the things which he is reported to have said in Moscow were probably only a small part of what he actually did say. I expect he only said them so as to make the rest go down well with his audience. Probably the really important things were said in private. Actually, I am sure he was a good ambassador of peace and culture between our own country and the U.S.S.R. It is a pity he can't say so.

Campbeltown, NAOMI MITCHISON

Argyll.

ASIA, AFRICA AND WAR

SIR,—When the prospects of a third World War are discussed, we tend to overlook the attitude of the peoples of Asia and Africa. Yet it is profoundly important. China, we may assume, would support Soviet Russia. What would be the reaction of the other Asian peoples and of the African peoples?

Despite India's membership of the Commonwealth, Janabarlal Nehru has announced her independence of the two Power Blocs, and that attitude is adopted even more strongly by the Indian Socialist Party and the Socialist Parties of South-East Asia. In Africa, the national democratic movements in both the British and French Empires are preparing to follow the example of the Indian National Congress in the last war, when Gandhi, Nehru and all India's best known leaders were imprisoned for resisting participation in a war so long as their country was denied democratic freedom.

Those interested in this subject may like to know of the Conference on the Colonies and War which is to be held in the Civic Theatre, Poplar, next Sunday from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. The Socialist Parties of most of the South-Eastern countries in Asia will be represented—Dr. Lokia and Dr. Varma are coming from India—and there will be official delegations from the national democratic movements in nearly all the African colonies in the British and French Empires. Visitors will be welcome.

8 Hillside Gardens, N.6. FENNER BROCKWAY

Chairman, Congress of Peoples Against Imperialism.

TRAITORS

SIR,—Forty or fifty years ago, few people in what we then thought to be progressive circles would have challenged the right of any man to take sides against the country in which through no fault of his own, he had been born. When my late friend, Dr. Arthur Lynch was condemned to death for fighting against the British in South Africa, the judge said such a trial might seem to be an anachronism and the sentence was not executed. As understood to-day, treason can only be committed against the Crown of Britain. Within a few days of Roger Casement's execution, representatives of the (then) Allied governments attended a requiem mass in London, in honour of an Italian deputy to the Reichsrath who had been hanged for taking sides with the Italians against his sovereign, the Austrian Kaiser. However, your contemporary, the *Observer*, held more liberal views. A few months prior to the execution of Joyce, that newspaper suggested that something should be done to honour the memory of Paul Jones, the Scottish sailor who in the service of the insurgent American colonies, waged war on his natural sovereign and among other exploits, attacked the coast of Cumberland. Your reviewer himself seems to have doubts about the wickedness or shabbiness of Casement and the partisans of Washington. STEPHEN ANDERSON

43a Gunterstone Road, W.14.

GREEK ARMISTICE?

SIR,—Ere the first throb of thankfulness at the Greek Government's decision to refer death sentences to a council of pardon had passed, an execution took place in Athens. It must be a disturbing revelation to those who honestly consider the Greek Government to have been in the right during the past four years to receive the Prime Minister's incredibly cynical explanation: " The motion postponing executions . . . is not yet in force." One can readily discover in this pitiless statement the moral virus that has caused disruption in Greece, making the task of reconciling the Balkan countries so much more difficult for the United Nations. E. H. ATHANASSOGLOU

15 New Street, London, E.C.2.

THE HIGHLANDS

SIR,—If Neil McCallum had considered more fully the implications of his reference to the "vast hinterland of hill and moor not amenable to the discipline of plough or factory," his conclusions would perhaps have been more positive. For it is, I suggest, the tragedy of the Highlands that following the break up of the clans with their low-level subsistence farming, the area farmed by the crofter has been insufficent to assure to him and his family an adequate livelihood. Evictions, sheep farming, and deer forests meant that the bulk of the population was concentrated on the inferior land, mainly in the coastal regions, depending on other activities to supplement the produce of the croft.

It is well known that these supplementary sources of income whether from fishing, deer forests, quarrying, etc., have deteriorated. One is thus back at the really fundamental question for Highland development and population growth. How can the crofter farm sufficient land to gain a living comparable to that which he could earn in other areas?

The second point is that the amount of arable land in the Highlands has decreased. Comparison with the area cultivated at the end of the 19th Century shows a startling decline. Bracken and heather have extended their hold on hill pasture. The soil has been exhausted by sheep farming and it is considered by many authorities that an increase in the arable area providing the basis for winter feeding for cattle, which aid the soil, as well as sheep, is a necessity.

It is suggested that crofter holdings of about 40 acres of arable land and 300 acres of hill pasture would be large enough to give a fair living from mixed farming which would include arable, cattle, sheep, and poultry.

To achieve this would not only require reform of the existing legislation regarding crofter tenures; thousands of small and badly-used crofts are one side of the problem. But it would also presuppose a larger measure of Government control of land use in the area raising once again the thorny question of deer forests and sporting rights. Finally, investment on new grass techniques, roads, amenities, and afforestation would have to be on a scale reserved up to now for projects of food production in areas where distance and risk have been much greater.

It is true that since the war subsidies of every kind, which may not be so unimportant electorally as Neil McCallum imagines, have hidden the basic issues of Highland Land Use. Whether communal farming, or large crofter holdings, is the best answer to the population and food production problem s a matter for sociological and economic study. But the future of the Highlands can, I believe, be assured by a rational use of Highland land. STUDENT

SOCIAL STUDIES TRUST

SIR,—A British Trust for Social Studies has been set up, with ourselves as the Trustees.

The purpose of this Trust is to encourage social research of scientific and practical importance by making small grants for particular projects. The recipient of a grant will be expected to produce within an agreed period a paper of from 5-7,000 words setting out the results of the research in a way that can be understood by intelligent non-technical readers. The material presented must be original or based on sources inaccessible to such readers.

The papers so produced will be at the disposition of the Trust for publication, but any payment accruing from publication will be remitted to the author of the paper. Importance is attached to the style of presentation, to the need for lucidity of expression and the avoidance of unnecessary technical terms or mathematical refinements. Applicants must submit a specimen of their written work, published or unpublished.

Grants will not normally be made to those who can carry out the research in the course of their regular work. Grants are intended to help the free lance investigator and those who are well placed for social observation, but who would have to work up the material in their spare time: for example, a colliery manager, a probation officer, a shop steward, a hospital almoner, the warden of a hostel, the editor of a local newspaper. It is contemplated that for the present grants will be not less than £20, this being quite separate from any payment derived from publication.

Application forms for grants may be obtained—by post only, not on personal application—from Miss Marion Nuttall, Secretary, British Trust for Social Studies, 16 Queen Anne's Gate, London, S.W.1.

MICHAEL YOUNG, CHARLES MADGE, EDWARD A. SHILS
T. S. SIMEY, P. SARGANT-FLORENCE

GERMAN STUDENTS

SIR,—Students from more than eighty German universities, training-colleges and high schools have come to this country to help with the potato harvest.

This committee is anxious to find hospitality for these students for a period of up to four weeks after the finish of the harvest in the middle of November.

If any of your readers would care to help we should be very grateful. The students have so far been able to see little except the potato fields and are all most anxious to take back to Germany some impressions of British home life. More details will be sent on application to this office. BARBARA MURRAY,

Liaison Officer

German Students' Harvest Scheme,
43, Parliament Street, S.W.1.

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Autumn Books Supplement

GOETHE IN 1949

GOETHE is one of those great writers to whom the cultured of every nation pay lip service but whom—outside German-speaking countries—almost nobody reads. There are several reasons for this. To begin with, there is the difficulty of his language. Except in his simpler lyrics Goethe wrote a German that is packed with snags for the foreigner: odd words and spellings, slang, antiquated inflexions, grammatical peculiarities. In *Faust* the vocabulary is as rich and racy as Shakespeare's; thought and image tumble over one another in a torrential staccato that is often as baffling as the later style of Browning. Again, except in a few instances, Goethe is an indigestible writer. Out of a dozen readers of *Iphigenia*, *Tasso*, *Werther*, and that solitary case, the *Novelle*, there will hardly be one who has attempted to absorb *Wilhelm Meister* or *The Elective Affinities*, the second part of *Faust*, obscurer plays like *The Natural Daughter* and *Der Gross-Cophta* (a brilliant fantasy on the subject of Cagliostro), or even *Truth and Poetry*. There is wisdom, beauty and imagination in all of these; but they are romantic art and carry the penalty of Goethe's improvisatory methods. Nothing he wrote is dull, because his mind was too lively to admit commonplace or superficial ideas; but much of it is tedious, partly no doubt because the tempo of thought in his day was more deliberate than it has since become, and partly because, in his prose works at any rate, Goethe evidently cared little for the advantages of form and brevity.

Another impediment to the distinct vision of Goethe as a whole is the bewilderingly various nature of his output. His *œuvre* is as miscellaneous as Bach's and at times as fragmentary as Shelley's. Artists are usually depressed by inability to finish what they have begun, but Goethe seems to have had no such qualms. It is noteworthy that, lyrics apart, his most highly finished and formally succinct productions belong to the earlier phases of his life, of which self-confidence was not the note. During the Frankfurt period and the first years in Weimar a sense of dangerous instability was compensated by self-contained works of art (*Götz*, *Werther*, the *Urfaust*, *Iphigenia*, *Tasso*). These guarantees of personal identity were for Goethe safeguards against his "chameleon-like" personality, and against that "sense of the past and present together in one; a phenomenon which brought something spectral into the present," as he puts it in his autobiography. With the gain in self-confidence fostered by Frau von Stein, and the growing sense of vocation instilled by his sojourn in Rome, Goethe looked to the process of his life to supply its own balance and justification. As a result of this his life and his art became, to an unexampled degree, inseparable: where the one threw up an unfinished or unsatisfactory relationship, its artistic equivalent was fragmentary too. There is no evidence that this perturbed him; anything which failed to "work" could be put aside; material—for art, as for life—was inexhaustible.

To those who stagger through life from one disappointment to another, falling ever deeper into despair, the spectacle of Goethe's progress—his feline ability to fall on his feet, to see the possibilities in everything that happened to him—is naturally irritating. But their dislike of Goethe rests, it seems to me, on the assumption that, because his technique of living was so successful, it must have been consciously adopted. Hints at the building of his complex character are indeed scattered up and down his works, like so many clues in a treasure hunt; but to assume that he knew at every step what the result would be—that he planned ahead, riding roughshod over anyone who happened to be in his way—is to take no account of the prodigal expense of spirit which a more prudent man could easily have avoided, or of the qualities of heart to which his contemporaries bear liberal witness. The ruthlessly selfish do not retain friends, as Goethe did, nor do the women they forsake continue to be fond of them to the end.

The secret of this astonishing man's success lies, I believe, in the patent fact that, if he caused suffering in others, he suffered quite as much himself—though the payment was not always in kind. In a tell-tale passage in *Werther* Goethe speaks of "a noble breed of horses which, when they are overdriven and overheated, instinctively bite through a vein, to ease themselves and get their breath again." Such was Goethe's own practice, throughout his long life; the bitten vein flowed out in a poem or a play, but the remedy was none the less an heroic one.

As an object lesson in the transformation of Personality into Character Goethe's career has few parallels. The universality of his genius recalls that of Leonardo da Vinci. English history offers no figure of similar versatility; but it is arguable that, gifted with a modicum of will-power, Coleridge might have achieved a comparable position.

The accusation, that Goethe was lacking in intellectual humility, is impossible to refute. Perhaps few to-day will take the charge seriously, since humility, in any form, is at present out of fashion. Nevertheless, pride limits the imagination, and the second part of *Faust* shows how fatal it is to choose this kind of subject if you have little or no religious sense. The final scene is purely conventional, *das Ewig-weibliche* the most vapid of symbols. To the end Goethe remained a child of the *Aufklärung*, with its central belief in the self-sufficiency of man. He never learnt how to relinquish selfhood and thus to open the final door on the reality behind appearances. Faust's dying speech is not the recognition of a fundamental error, but a cry of exasperation at not having wrung still more out of his desperate pact. Even now it is power over the world that he craves, not understanding of it. As drama the scene is wonderfully beautiful, sinister and sad; but it reveals the essential hollowness of the play's philosophy.

As a boy Goethe used to entertain his companions with improvised stories. In one of these he dreamed of a place which they all knew—a wall overhung by nut trees, with an inscribed tablet, underneath it a fountain, and traces of an old door. In Goethe's dream the door opens and an old man ushers him through into a garden, where he meets with some fantastic adventures, at first delightful, but ultimately mortifying. Afterwards, he tells us, he returned often to the spot: at first the nut trees, the tablet and the fountain seemed to have parted company, but at each visit they moved nearer to one another. Of the door, however, there was no trace. "Probably," concludes Goethe, "when all is brought together again, the door, too, will once more be visible." The nature of humility—the surrender of self—was thus revealed to him; but the door did not reappear, through which in reality he might have reached it.

As a lyric poet Goethe combines simplicity of utterance with so complete a mastery of verbal music that the most banal ideas become as moving as the faces and objects which form the chosen ambience of our lives. No poet with a less assured technique, and less emotional conviction, could afford to be as obvious as Goethe is, in poem after poem. Verse-making was to him a form of communication almost as effortless as speech. To adapt a phrase of the late Richard Strauss, Goethe gave poetry as a cow gives milk. And the result is never facile or vulgar because the idea or emotion is the direct result of an experience, not a conceit chosen as likely to produce an effective poem. We have no poet of this kind to-day, nor are we likely to get one, in the present state of the world. In the past hundred years the most powerful poetic minds have operated in a very different fashion, seeking ever greater ingenuity in the tesselation of startling and far-fetched images, exploring recondite states of mind and capitalising the private dream. It is futile to deplore this development and still more foolish to demand a conscious return to the simple and the straightforward. At the same time it must be admitted that the later proliferations of romantic and symbolist theory have tended to obscure one of the most valuable functions of poetry: the illumination of the usual. It is in this field, above all, that Goethe reigns supreme.

EDWARD SACKVILLE-WEST

ON THE DEATH OF WILLIAM BELL

No need of pity here; not one of us
may hope for more than a self-chosen mountain,
strength to persist and courage to look down.
Not sun and snow dazzling the brief ascent,
the virtuosity of tautened limbs
or pride in climbing are significant:
the chasm counts, the base makes Matterhorn.

His choice was vertical: against the void
which mind and body fear his will rebelled—
he pitied us who vegetate in valleys,
close to the centre, death, and cannot fall:
"See how their lives like rags bought anywhere
hang on their bones; not made for them, picked up
in stores and pawnshops without love or care.

We too were poor, almost convinced that fate
was some such patchwork or a luxury
beyond our means—when suddenly we knew:
only our nakedness was wholly ours.

We climbed and stripped, dropping our former wealth,
fag-ends of worn-out fates, scribbles of joy
scratched on to scraps of yellowing despair
and held together by a rusty hope.

We saw them drifting through the clouds below,
rejoicing in our loss, our liberty;
we knew that though the end might well be death
it is the way that counts: the way was life."

MICHAEL HAMBURGER

THE UGLY ACT

W. E. Henley. By JOHN CONNELL. *Constable.* 21s.

The wide and indiscriminating territory of literature, with all its range of human authorship from the Great Pashas to the D.P.'s, the criminals and the underground, surely contains few figures less agreeable than W. E. Henley. His reputation would hardly have survived into a centenary year on the strength of such poems as *Out of the Night* with its bombast and muddled thought (although Mr. Connell finds them in all "respectable anthologies"—odd epithet), and the fame of the editor must always be short lived. Only a biographer has time to look through the files of a dead review, listing the faded names of contributors that once, vivid with promise, seemed to cast a lustre over their leader—David Hannay, G. S. Street, Katherine Tynan, Marriott Watson, T. E. Brown and the like. And yet, in some strange way, this ill-tempered cripple does still live in literary history: we cannot quite forget him; he glares out at us from the shadows of the last century, breathing heavily through his big beard, his fist like Long John Silver's ready with his crutch, arousing our attention by the venom of his quarrels, by his ignobility and violence and the long-drawn-out malignity of his character, that elephantine quality which ensured his never forgetting what he considered an injury, although he was always ready to extend the warm hearty palm of forgiveness to a victim when the injury had been inflicted by himself.

The most famous of his quarrels was of course that with Stevenson, and the most long lived, for Henley nursed his memory of it nearly twenty years before at last he had his say about his dead friend in the famous *Pall Mall Magazine* review of Graham Balfour's biography. Of that review Henry James wrote, in a letter that Mr. Connell might have quoted if he had taken a more impartial view of Henley:

> It's really a rather striking and lurid—and so far interesting case—of long discomfortable jealousy and ranklement turned at last to posthumous (as it were!) malignity, and making the man do, *coram publico*, his ugly act, risking the dishonour for the assuagement . . . the whole business illustrates how life takes upon itself to give us more true and consistent examples of human unpleasantness than expectation could suggest—makes a given man, I mean, live up to his ugliness.

Mr. Connell, however, one must admit, is impartial enough for us to see Henley living up to his ugliness in a yet more extreme form. Wilde, unaffected by the attacks on *Dorian Gray*, that had appeared under Henley's editorship, had written to him on the death of his daughter a letter of gentle and perceptive sympathy.

> I am very sorry indeed to hear of your great loss—I hope you will let me come down quietly to you one evening and over our cigarettes we will talk of the bitter ways of fortune, and the hard ways of life. But, my dear Henley, to work—to work—that is your duty—that is what remains for natures like ours. Work never seems to me a reality, but as a way of getting rid of reality.

It is hard to uncover the source of Henley's rage against Wilde. Perhaps Wilde's very generosity—a quality in which Henley was deficient—called it out, in the same way that the money Henley regularly received from Stevenson, even after their friendship had ceased, made it all the more necessary to him to assert, however viciously, his independence. Perhaps it was simply the jealousy of a bad writer for his superior who had replied with such impervious wit and good humour to his critics in the *National Observer*. Wilde was not vulnerable to journalistic attack, and Henley seems to have felt a shabby delight at the thought that at least he was vulnerable to the law. And so again we have the sight of Henley exposing himself far more drastically than he exposed his victim in those ugly letters in which he kept Whibley in Paris posted on the news of the two trials.

> Oscar at Bay was on the whole a pleasing sight . . . Holloway and Bow Street have taken his hair out of curl in more senses than one. And I am pretty sure that he is having a dam bad time. . . .
>
> As for Hosker, the news is that he lives with his brother, and is all day steeping, steeping himself in liquor, and moaning for Boasy! I am summoned to play the juryman next Monday (*je m'en fiche pas mal*), and it isn't impossible that I should have at least the occasion of sitting upon him. For, they say, he has lost all nerve, all pose, all everything; and is just now so much the Ordinary Drunkard that he has not even the energy to kill himself.

The depressing nature of the hero is emphasised by a certain drabness in his biographer. This is never at its best a well-written book, and Mr. Connell shows little power of discrimination in his choice of material. The letters to Whibley are, for the most part, incredibly tedious—repeated complaints of overdue articles, news of his own books, bluff out-dated slang. Here is one typical paragraph to stand for hundreds: "The book seems to be thriving no end. Nutt has ordered all the edition from the binder: and therewith the remainder of Ed. Sec. of *A.B. of V.* So the oof-bird may presently begin to flutter."

Mr. Connell makes little attempt to place his subject critically—perhaps it is a pity that he makes any attempt at all. "As a staff and talisman for a human being in the dark straits to which many are driven, *Out of the Night* has considerable virtue." This, and the "respectable anthologies," and the loose bandying of such a phrase as "dark night of the soul" makes the reader wish that Mr. Connell's "respectable" publishers had exercised a measure of editorial supervision. Nor do we have any more confidence in Mr. Connell as a judge of character than as a judge of literature. He hints darkly that the relationship between Stevenson and Henley was homosexual, but he produces no shred of evidence and he completely ignores the long series of letters from Stevenson to Henley in connection with their collaboration—so far more interesting than the Whibley correspondence—that shows a detached professional relationship quite out of keeping with his picture of over-romantic friendship. It is doubtful whether Henley will interest future biographers and one therefore regrets that this biography is not more critical and more sensitive.

GRAHAM GREENE

THE ASTRINGENT ASPHODEL

The Common Asphodel: Essays on Poets and Poetry. By ROBERT GRAVES. *Hamish Hamilton.* 15s.

More than two-thirds of the essays in this volume were written in the nineteen-twenties, and only twenty pages—four short fragments—date from the nineteen-forties. The special interest of the book is, therefore, that of a revival of a decade that many of us remember very well, and in which we confront our own younger, greener selves, as well as the young, energetic, but intellectually mature figure of Robert Graves as he was then.

Mr. Graves made his name as a poet of the first world war, and as a critic of the between wars period. I believe that he has done better work since—*The White Goddess* seems to me a much more important book than *The Common Asphodel*—but there is no doubt that his criticism had a considerable and salutary influence in the Twenties, both before and during his literary collaboration with Miss Laura Riding, which began in 1926 and continued until 1939.

Revisiting this past we encounter again the poets and poetic movements that excited us in those days, Imagists and Modernists, E. E. Cummings and John Crowe Ransom, the T. S. Eliot of *The Waste Land* and the Edith Sitwell of *Façade*. The mature poetic features of these poets are familiar to a wide public nowadays, and the excitement of discovery is for the common reader, not for practising poets. If our younger selves owed more to these poets' younger selves than our mature selves owe to their mature selves, it is not because they are now less important as poets, but because it is only the young who really care (except by way of kindness and a wish to help) about the "new" literature, or who are likely to learn from it. Mr. Graves has doubtless better things to do in 1949 than to write detailed and penetrating criticism of new poems as slender as the early Cummings and Marianne Moore that he analysed so searchingly in 1927. All the same his criticism of contemporary work written at that time might well serve as a standard for young critics of the present. There is no doubt that the critical standards of the nineteen-twenties were higher than those of to-day. At that time, poets and critics wrote for one another in reviews like the *Criterion*, the *Calendar* and *Transition*. Practising poets to-day have no review of any standing at their disposal in which they can publish and discuss work in progress. Discussions of literary problems of this kind would be boring to the general public, but serious writers of the present time suffer from lack of the discipline and stimulus of first-class working criticism. Most of the critical writing of the nineteen-forties has been journalism—that is, addressed to a public assumed to know less than the writer himself. The criticism of the nineteen-twenties was addressed to equals.

The bulk of this book is salutary, astringent, negative criticism. The immediate need and the undoubted achievement of the Twenties was the debunking of false emotional attitudes and a rhetoric that went with them. Rhetoric and attitudes were alike survivals from the nineteenth century and had grown false gradually and imperceptibly. The war showed them up, and a habit of intellectual honesty once acquired, the transformation was rapid. The work was done so thoroughly and so well by poets and critics like Robert Graves, T. S. Eliot, I. A. Richards and F. R. Leavis, that we have almost forgotten what a vast bulk of rubbish they did clear away and how well the "modernist" poets of the decade succeeded in the programme that T. S. Eliot has retrospectively defined, "To purify the dialect of the tribe"

Robert Graves's period of salutary negative criticism coincides approximately with his literary collaboration with Laura Riding, and one is bound to agree with his own verdict, in 1949, that the job was well done. E. E. Cummings, John Crowe Ransom, Marianne Moore, Edith Sitwell and T. S. Eliot were the principal poets that Robert Graves and Laura Riding picked out as genuine; and so they were. But their omissions and dislikes also reveal the limitations of the intellectual scolding method whose standards, being purely rational, are not capable of distinguishing between false emotionalism and the kind of poetic innocence or sublimity that transcends rational analysis. D. H. Lawrence is dismissed with a few scornful phrases about "sex-obsession." Hardy is not mentioned; and Yeats is discussed only as the author of the *Lake Isle of Innisfree* which is ridiculed along with other popular poems of that time by Ralph Hodgson, de la Mare, and Masefield. A method well designed for showing up fraud reduces not only Milton (Mr. Graves's particular *bête noire*) but Wordsworth, Lucretius, Nietzsche, and even Shakespeare, to less than life size, because Mr. Graves makes life size too small.

With the exception of Pound, whom Mr. Graves dislikes (although he might have used the arguments with which he defends Cummings to defend Pound), all these omissions and dislikes reveal the limitations of the intellectualism of the Twenties. The standards then current were not adequate for dealing with poetry that could not be evaluated in rational terms. Robert Graves mistrusted all feeling, even feeling as true as Lawrence's, and all sublimity, even

Yeats's. The power of feeling and the sense of sublimity had, in many of the most sensitive poets of his generation, been stunned by the war. But of the "modernist" poets who suffered from the malady, only Eliot presented the loss of feeling and of the sense of sublimity as tragic. Mr. Graves sometimes writes as if a loss of faith in every response not sanctioned by the "truthful" intellect is a kind of blessed emancipation from illusion.

There are, however, in Robert Graves's early criticism elements of a more positive kind. Even then he insisted that the only test of poetry is, Will it move a mountain?—perform a miracle of faith? An interesting essay on the sources of *The Tempest*, written in 1925, makes Sycorax the dominant figure of the island, and points forward to the later myth of the terrible goddess who has become Mr. Graves's later muse. Intellect is a weapon that Mr. Graves can wield very well for destructive purposes, and often in a good cause, for rubbish has to be destroyed. He has used it too well, perhaps, against his own poetic genius, on which his critical "honesty" and mistrust of feeling has had an inhibiting effect. But his essential nature is that of a poet. He knows, as only true poets know, what inspiration is. His literary partner in this decade is the muse—the best partner for a poet, because goddesses have not opinionated minds, and are content to inspire and to create, not to criticise.

KATHLEEN RAINE

THE GOOD GRUMBLER

Delight. By J. B. PRIESTLEY. *Heinemann.* 10s. 6d.

When Mr. Priestley first arrived in Fleet Street in his late twenties, he had published, or was about to publish, a little book, a *jeu d'esprit*, *Brief Diversions*, and a volume of essays, *Papers From Lilliput*. This was a small enough output on which to base a prophecy of his future career; yet the eminent writer who introduced me to him said to me not long afterwards: "Mark my words. By the time he is fifty, he'll be the dominating figure in literary London. He'll be another Dr. Johnson." Even if Mr. Priestley is not a second Dr. Johnson—and, indeed, it is all but impossible that there should ever be a second Dr. Johnson—it could be plausibly argued that the prophecy has in a measure come true. Among men of letters, he more than any of his contemporaries seems to have achieved the status of a national figure. He might be classed with Dr. Johnson, too, as a representative Englishman—one of the breed of that enigmatical character, John Bull.

Ever since he came to the microphone during the war and addressed his fellow-countrymen in a series of incomparable Postscripts, his name has been known to a larger public than that of any other living writer except Mr. Shaw. The educated public had already got to know him as the author of some of the best fiction of his time, some of the best plays of his time, some of the best travel books of his time, and some of the best essays of his time; but in his Postscripts he captured a vast new public who cared for none of these things—men and women who had never been in a bookshop or a library in their lives. His name and his praises were oftener to be heard in back streets and country inns than those of most Cabinet Ministers. Even those who are, as people say nowadays, allergic to Mr. Priestley will hardly question this.

Mr. Priestley, however, has shown himself to be a representative Englishman, not only in the tenacious courage of his Postscripts and in the good humour of *The Good Companions*, but in his gift for grumbling. "I have always been a grumbler" he confesses on the first page of his new book, and he evidently feels that he may have over-played the part and have created a wrong impression by doing so. Hence he has been constrained to write a book that will strike a balance by revealing him as a man whose life has been a tale not of a series of grumbles but of a sequence of delights. Of these delights clearly grumbling itself has been one, for in his preface he sets out to justify himself on hedonistic grounds for grumbling at such things as a bad breakfast in a hotel. He objects to people who say to him on occasions of this sort: "Oh—do be quiet! It's bad enough without your grumbling." "My mind," he declares, "does not move along these lines. If I have not had a good breakfast, I argue, at least I have had a good grumble." His caricature of himself as a grumbler, indeed, is drawn in a mood not of repentance but of comic appreciation. "I was designed for the part, for I have a sagging face, a weighty underlip, what I am told is a saurian eye, and a rumbling but resonant voice from which it is difficult to escape."

People who think that Mr. Priestley was, like Hazlitt, born under Saturn, will find in *Delight* evidence that he can escape from time to time and live under the influence of benigner stars. Among the hundred and more sources of delight recorded here are "waking just in time to smell coffee and bacon and eggs" and smoking in a hot bath, and so we go on through the day from "making stew" and children's games and family silliness to reading detective stories in bed.

He writes, for the most part, of the minor pleasures of life; and each of these adds a touch to a by no means superficial self-portrait of the author. See him in his bath, for example, smoking a pipe. "People," he writes, "still say to me, 'The way you work,' and behind the modest smirk I laugh secretly, knowing myself to be one of the laziest and most self-indulgent men alive." In his bath he certainly lives up to the description. "I am not even soaping and scrubbing, but simply lying there like a pink porpoise, puffing away . . . lost in steam, the fumes of Latakia, and the vaguest dreams."

The book is full of such pleasant touches of self-mockery. How he laughs at himself because of the delight he takes in "giving advice, especially when I am in no position to give it and hardly know what I am talking about!" He goes on:

> Because I am heavy, have a deep voice and smoke a pipe, few people realise that I am flibbertigibbet on a weathercock. So my advice is asked. And then, for ten minutes or so, I can make Polonius look a trifler. I settle deep in my chair, two hundred pounds of portentousness, and with some first-rate character touches in the voice and business with pipe, I begin: "Well, I must say that in your place—" And inside I am bubbling with delight.

Here the reader may observe a resemblance to the amiable self-derision of Logan Pearsall Smith in *Trivia*, but Mr. Priestley's book runs through a wider area of humanity. There is more of Everyman in him as when he confesses: "I doubt if there is anything in my life that I regret more bitterly than I do my frequent failures as a boy to bring delight to my parents by showing them how pleased I was." In speaking of this, he records an experience painfully common in the lives of the sensitive young:

> There has always been in me a little devil—or, if you prefer it, a perverse rather than boorish streak—that will not allow me to show pleasure when it is expected of me. The moment of unwrapping the present, of responding to congratulations, of seeing at last what has been so lovingly planned and carried out for me, always finds me staring out of a pewter-coloured eye, frowning, hesitant, mumbling, blankly un-appreciative. I can light up at some unexpected bit of nonsense, often at the smallest attention, but at the appointed and long-expected hour . . . I flop heavily. And the worst victims of any such inadequacy or perversion are parents.

Reading these essays or notes or whatever you like to call them, you realise that Mr. Priestley is himself the target for some of his most serious grumbling. There is no excess of self-flattery in these pages. If, like the rest of us, he is not altogether free from egotism, he knows it. Did he not once say to the woman who was sitting beside him at a banquet while a blatantly self-satisfied speaker was holding forth: "That man looks as conceited as I feel"?

ROBERT LYND

PRIVATE FACES

The Journals of André Gide. Vol. III. 1928-1939. Edited and translated by JUSTIN O'BRIEN. *Secker & Warburg.* 30s.

The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 1914-1923. Edited by MAX BROD. *Secker & Warburg.* 16s.

These great journals of M. Gide are inspiring, and they also cause despair. Despair: because there is no living English writer on whom we could count for a mental trajectory of such sweep and force. I say this in no spirit of Sunday-newspaper patriotism. But the feeling is wrung from one, when reading M. Gide, that here we vulgarize our problems, that English thinking is smudged, a shuffling of well-thumbed views, that we applaud gestures rather than thoughts. It's not a question of relative lack of intelligence, brain-power, information, or anything of that sort, but of a habit: the habit of a free play of the mind over all the matter which it brings to birth, whether through private attachments, or under the influence of things public and contemporary. Nor is it only a question of particular persons, happening to have good minds, but of an intellectual free market, which makes for brisk dealing. "*De la discussion jaillit la clarté.*" Who subscribes to that here, except in the bland sense of Fellows' port and candles? In France, discussion becomes a kind of sword-play. And M. Gide has the customary elegance of French duelling, and also a Protestant austerity: note his admiration for just that quality in Browning, in Mark Rutherford. Unmessy, not dandified, his thought strikes home. It can't be laughed off.

And what a sustained performance it is! We have no comparable record of the uneasy, important years, 1928-1939, which M. Gide here spans. Certainly nothing in prose; and our poetic journalism (the nearest equivalent) of that time has now a quaint period flavour, which M. Gide's reflections avoid. They are as acute and meaningful now as then, and the reason is simple. Thought,

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A most readable story of the problems that arose when a group of young people set up a communal settlement on a deserted Hebridean island.
By the author of *June in Skye.* 10/6

thought, thought: that is the reason: no jaunty rationalizing. During those years M. Gide's hopes in Communism grew, until they preoccupied him, and then they crashed. But all the time he was thinking "behind" politics, testing the antagonisms of freedom and constraint, inclination and obligation, Christianity and Marxist materialism, private ethic and social ethic; peering out from the "extremity of individualism" towards new vistas of authority and discipline, and seeking to reconcile or to distinguish. These expressions of his mind are impregnably accurate, tidy, and rigorous, Gothic in their angularity. They resume all those troublesome arguments of the twentieth century, which we have by no means settled. It has only happened that the political form of them—straight match of Communists against the decent rest—has become more convenient and comfortable mentally for a great many people, who then admit no other form. But the arguments are still alive, wriggling under the dead leaves of clichés and half-truths.

M. Gide can say now that he never did smother them. He is a didactic writer; more so in this period of his journals, as awareness of his influence, and its responsibilities, grows, and as his mind turns more towards public affairs. He would like his writings to foster "strength, courage, awareness; scorn for false virtues." "In spite of many weaknesses man can make himself a hero." He braces his readers to a healthy sense of crisis. Not crisis in any newspaper-sense, but crisis of themselves as men placed among other men, thinking, choosing, needing, at once dependent and free. The sharpness of M. Gide's notations will spur them to do their own examining. Here, on page 220, is a sharp and agile, very characteristic note:

> Many critics have been shocked by these words in my preface to *Vol de Nuit*: "I am particularly grateful to him (Saint-Exupéry) for throwing light on this paradoxical truth, for me considerably important psychologically: that man's happiness lies not in freedom, but in the acceptance of a duty." They immediately exclaim that this truth has nothing paradoxical about it and has on the contrary been long recognized, accepted (by them at least), and that what is paradoxical is my taking so long to become aware of it. But the thing they are not aware of is that the paradox is discovering this "truth" at the extremity of individualism. I should even like to add that if this truth does not seem to them paradoxical, it is because they do not fully understand it, and that it takes on a totally different aspect according to whether one accepts or discovers it. What one discovers or rediscovers for oneself are living truths; tradition urges us to accept mere dead remains of truths.

That "tradition," those "critics": M. Gide fires a sniper's shot in his sly, perpetual war against his militant Catholic contemporaries, with their, to him, exasperating spirituality, their habits of "lying in wait" for writers veering towards conversion, of "annexing" or dismissing wholesale. One feels, in all his scrupulous weighings, his counterpoising of authority and freedom, the influence of this watchful Catholic power, something always to be reckoned with. In France the Catholic Church has helped clear thinking by the very antagonism she provokes. "There are certain days" (so writes M. Gide) "when if I merely let myself go, I should roll directly under the Lord's Table. They think it is pride that withholds me. Not at all! It is intellectual integrity."

The battle with the Catholics, often very amusing, is a side-show in M. Gide's diary. But so, in a sense, are all his battles. There is something in him of the spirit of those Cuverville peasant women, who, when Mme Gide (in January, 1932) tried to reassure them that war was unlikely, replied: "But then why have matches gone up two sous?" He is concerned with the "two sous" of every situation. Worry about the size of tips, care for commas, for the minutiae of scansion and grammar, annoyance at misquotation: noticing, while everyone else in the restaurant appears to be relishing it, that the meat is "slightly spoiled." The decimal points are indicative of a method of thought which M. Gide carries over into his bigger accounts. For instance, into his taste for the natural sciences, his preference for those detailed studies to any large inquiry of metaphysics, which might ignore them. All his writing shows this care for the detail, the exception, the "imponderable," the "psychological factor." So his thought is not so much in the middle as at the margin of our times; a marginal annotation, an elongated bracket. What these journals constantly do, is to remind us of all those annoying exceptions, objections, questions, distinctions, which easy habits of thinking conveniently forget. That also is why they are so alive.

The rarefied worldliness, the din of contemporaries, the advantageous critical airs of France: all these recede, disappear as one approaches Kafka. Diaries could hardly be more different. M. Gide's, even in the writing, is public—he is constantly anticipating some possible objection of a future reader—the journal is one of his "works"; Kafka's is utterly private. Delete a few references, it would seem to belong to no period. The difference doesn't favour Kafka. One misses the European contact, there is occasionally a *lumpen*-element, a sort of far-away Continental provincialism, which perhaps reflect his circumstances rather than his mind.

As far as this is a world, it is that world of inns and girls' blouses, students and landladies, snowstorms and castellans, which we know from Kafka's formal writing. A world of low temperature seen under a street-lamp at night. "Departing," as his friend and editor Max Brod says, "in a mysterious way from everything customary"; even when, as in the Travel Diaries, "his manner of observing things seems thoroughly natural." This strangeness, with its curious internal balance and logic, seems at moments to flush some distant drain inside oneself.

". . . if I merely let myself go . . ." So writes M. Gide, who never does. But Kafka has gone, gone already, sunk, to the bottom of himself, as to the bottom of a deep well; whence rise these hollow, uncanny echoes. Self-conquest, self-surrender: the difference of assumptions is fundamental, and it sunders these two remarkable minds at the very point where they meet, the point which M. Gide calls "the debate of the individual with whatever keeps him from being authentic." Kafka knows that debate, but for him it is already lost, there can be no question of victory.

> Only in such extremes does one become aware of how every person is lost in himself beyond hope of rescue, and one's sole consolation in this is to observe other people and the law governing them and everything. How, outwardly, Wolf can be guided, moved here or there, cheered up, encouraged, induced to work systematically,—and how, inwardly, he is held fast and immovable.

So, with Kafka, the debate shifts its ground, it becomes for the individual a question of locating his obligations. But this is not always a matter of conscious intellectual approach, and there is in these diaries less reflection of it than perhaps one might expect. Held together only by unity of tone, they consist of impressions, jottings, half incidents, lists of depressing and troublesome sensations, occasionally a luminous aphorism or piece of criticism, here and there (especially in the rather fascinating, all-too-short section of Travel Diaries), a moment of delicious owlish comicality. Scrupulously edited, they have considerable interest in themselves, and also an accessory interest for all admirers of Kafka.

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The memory of a certain Mlle Flore, Artiste du Théâtre des Variétés, deserves our gratitude. Whenever Mr. Szigeti, engaged on his task of autobiography, was so much disheartened by a sense of his incapacity that he began to falter, it was to a book of her memoirs, published in 1845, that he turned most often and most effectually for a stimulus; for on the title page was this epigraph: "*Pourquoi n'écrirais-je pas mes Mémoires? Ma blanchisseuse écrit bien les siens!*" It is typical of this great violinist's modest nature that, like Mlle Flore, he should have wanted a justification; but his diffidence was quite needless. Few executant musicians have displayed a literary virtuosity comparable to his, and few men of any vocation have written so perfectly in a language not their own. Although by a merciful dispensation of Providence even the greatest interpretative artists are not obliged to cultivate their minds, Mr. Szigeti has nevertheless chosen to do so. For this he deserves more credit than those of us who have not been prodigies might think. As a child he received almost no formal education. At an early age he was one of Hubay's star pupils and, in consequence, a marketable product. Already by his thirteenth year he had performed at innumerable concerts and private parties in Budapest, had toured the summer resorts of Hungary and Bohemia, and had made his début in Berlin; he had even played the Mendelssohn Concerto at a circus, where he was billed between a lion-tamer and a bareback rider. This kind of life broadened his mind but hardly deepened it; and even his musical development was not much advanced by the constant grinding out of the popular salon pieces—*sucrettes* as Ysaye called them—of Sarasate, Wieniawski, Vieuxtemps, etc. To his promoters and impresarios, moreover, his backwardness was a financial asset; they didn't want him to grow up; indeed they kept him in shorts so late into his adolescence that he sometimes had to depilate his legs before appearing in public. It was not until his first

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JONATHAN CAPE

visit to England at the age of fourteen, when he came under the influence of Busoni and Felix Moscheles and other enlightened people, that he was able gradually to emancipate himself and begin an intensive course of self-education, a course which has not since then been interrupted.

Except during the first World War when he settled in Geneva and during the second when he became a citizen of America, Mr. Szigeti has been almost constantly on the move; and in the course of his travels he has met nearly all the great musical figures of the last four decades. His book is rich with anecdotes about them: Debussy, after a particularly luscious and overacted interpretation of one of his "Chansons de Bilitis," turning to Ansermet in dismay and whispering "*Serai-je pornographe?*": Goldmark, in his eighties, found soaking unused postage stamps off the corners of envelopes, and explaining, "This is my means of subsistence, you see: autograph-collectors' self-addressed envelopes. I soak them off. Quite a little income . . ." Of all Mr. Szigeti's tours the Russian ones are the most interesting to read about. After so much generalised abuse and eulogy of the U.S.S.R. by amateur and professional politicians, it is refreshing to be given his sensitive, disinterested impressions and to hear that whatever their virtues and failings in other directions, the Russians are still the most appreciative musical audience in the world. Their demonstrativeness especially appealed to Mr. Szigeti. Like many other great musicians, Wagner, Verdi, and Richard Strauss among them, he is intolerant of that devout kind of concert-goer who frowns at spontaneous applause in the middle of a performance.

Mr. Szigeti intersperses his reminiscences with several other reflections, on matters even more important than applause. One chapter, for instance, assesses the present quality of instrumental technique; another discusses the relation of the interpretative artist to the composer; another reviews the development of gramophone recording. And these are written with the same mastery as the narrative passages. Indeed the whole book proves how discerning was the remark of an impresario which Mr. Szigeti overheard more than forty years ago. "Make no mistake! Had Joska been destined to become a cobbler he would have turned out to be a rather *extraordinarily* good cobbler!"

A *glissando*, or rapid slur, takes us to the books of Mrs. Weston and Mrs. Napier. Perhaps to a professional psychologist every autobiography reads like an expurgated case-history. Certainly these two would; they suggest the similarity even to a layman. Both women hated their mothers and adored their fathers; both had an unhappy childhood; Mrs. Napier was always wishing to be a boy; Mrs. Weston was always wishing to get into trousers; and both have taken advantage in their books, at times rather shockingly, of the abreaction afforded by frank confession. Mrs. Weston confines herself to an account of her childhood. It was a very sad childhood. In fact the reader is almost battered into insensibility by the reiteration of its saddest features. A little unexpected relief, however, is provided by a chapter about Longfellow; and the happy ending, where the unwanted child is sent to a school in England run by the platonic idea of the Good Head, is one of those delicious restoratives which makes the antecedent pain worthwhile. The childhood of Mrs. Napier was presumably covered in her last book, *Youth is a Blunder*. The title *Winter is in July*, suggests an equally pessimistic view of middle age, but it must be taken to refer to the Australian calendar, for the author lived nine years in that continent soon after her first marriage, and most of the book consists of a lively description of her activities there in "Society" and on sheep farms. Mrs. Napier spent the first nineteen years of her life being fashioned into the typical product of a philistine and reactionary upper-class family. When marriage and the impact of Australia opened her eyes to wider horizons she gallantly set out on a spiritual journey, a somewhat perilous and tortuous one, from Belgravia to Bohemia. How much of the ground she has so far covered it would be difficult to say. But some indication of her progress may be gathered from her confession that she has become "essentially of the world that reads the NEW STATESMAN."

Mrs. Yates skips her American childhood and begins her book on a summer day in 1927. On that day, having just returned to New York and work from a holiday in Europe, she and her husband decided to start a different kind of life. Within twenty-four hours they had resigned their respective jobs, she from *The New Yorker*, he from a real estate office, had let their flat and stored their furniture, and had set off in search of a living space where only mountains scraped the skies. They found what they wanted in Montana—over three hundred acres of uncultivated land in the foothills of the Little Big Horns, about seventy miles from the nearest town. The story of how they built by themselves their own log cabin and tamed the wilderness and started a cattle ranch is as exciting as *The Swiss Family Robinson* and as entertaining as *The New Yorker* itself. MICHAEL RAMSBOTHAM

THE FABIAN PARTNERSHIP

The Webbs and Their Work. Edited by MARGARET COLE. *Muller.* 15s.

The time has not yet come for a complete account of the Webbs. The diary that Beatrice wrote in the night watches has so far been made available only in part. Apart from this gap in the sources, it is too early to decide on the value and influence of all that the Webbs did and said. Mrs. Cole has done the next best thing, and edited this collection of essays, all but two of them by people who knew the Webbs personally. A few of the contributions—and these the most entertaining—are memoirs of the intimate kind. Others consider the work of the Webbs in particular fields, the Fabian Society, the London School of Economics, The Poor Law Commission of 1905–1909, the NEW STATESMAN, the Labour Cabinets. Obviously, personal reminiscences had to be garnered soon, before memories faded. Bernard Shaw, whose recollections are as bright and pointed as a new needle, was reluctant to say much. Grudgingly, without grace, he barks out a few gruff paragraphs in the form of answers to a questionnaire, which poor Mrs. Cole has had to elucidate with notes. Edward Peace, first General Secretary of the Fabian Society, (who once, it appears, got Shaw to investigate a haunted house in Clapham), is also in his nineties, but has with far less fuss written adequately about Sidney Webb's role as an early Fabian. The general standard of the essays is high, but the whole book has an irritatingly spineless quality. Younger readers especially will look in vain for one comprehensive survey of the main biographical facts. G. D. H. Cole might have written this, as a long first chapter; he displays half a mind to do it, in his account of Beatrice as an economist. The book is ill balanced. All the writers endorse Shaw's verdict that The Partnership was a perfect collaboration; but the lion's share of their attention is on Sidney. Few of them say nearly enough about Beatrice.

The widely different people who knew Sidney depict him with remarkable unanimity. If he was notorious for trying to turn friendships to practical use, he did so without meanness or guile. In a sense, he treated himself in the same fashion. Despite his fantastic speed as a reader—he once read the first volume of *Das Kapital* in an hour—he early decided that he could not afford the time to cultivate literature and the arts. One infers that he was born with aesthetic sensibilities, but let them wither away. Hence, when asked if he had enjoyed his only visit to a Wagner opera, "Oh, yes," he said, "we had a most enjoyable evening. We happened to be sitting just behind Herbert Samuel. I was able to have a most useful conversation with him in the interval on the incidence of sickness in pregnancy." Beatrice frightened many people in her character of Edwardian *grande dame*, or put them off with such remarks as "Marriage is the waste-paper basket of the emotions." But no one doubts that she and Sidney were deeply in love with each other for fifty years. The face in Shaw's photograph of her is surely imaginative and sensitive, telling more than pages of memoirs.

The major achievements of the Webbs were concentrated in the years between the publication of *Facts For Socialists* in 1887 and the issue of the Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission in 1909. The historical evaluation of what they wrote and taught is a formidable task, and really needs careful articulation by a single pen. The present book has sacrificed unity of vision and gives in return a refreshing diversity of opinion. Mrs. Cole rightly feels that it is too soon to be definitive; but one conclusion here reached will hardly be disputed. No one before Sidney and Beatrice devoted to such institutions as contemporary local government and trade unions deep analytical study based on the scientific gathering and classifying of vast numbers of facts. The Webbs insisted that their work benefited from their careers as practical politicians, though Beatrice for the sake of social research was often tempted to give up all politics and wire-pulling. In the long run she knew that the realism of the Minority Report of 1909 grew out of her exhausting struggles on the Poor Law Commission, just as Sidney's years of manoeuvring on the London County Council kept him from visionary dreaming. In these arenas they learned that Fabian tactics would not produce a Socialist remedy for problems such as those of destitution. Thus were they led to found the Labour Research Department to work out afresh plans for a Socialist state. The history of the L.R.D. aptly illustrates the methods of the Webbs. They began it, but it rapidly became very different in organisation and purpose from what they imagined; yet however much they disliked it, they never repudiated or tried to recapture it. In the same way, they scrupulously kept from interfering with the young NEW STATESMAN The London School of Economics, on the other hand, was, in Lord Beveridge's words, "their favourite brain-child, dearer even than Fabian Socialism."

The Webbs and Their Work is welcome for its correction of various errors. For instance even Beatrice accepted the general view that because Sidney was a poor speaker at sixty-five, he had not been a good one when younger. But R. C. K. Ensor bears witness that Sidney in the 'nineties could grip audiences as diverse and exacting as the Oxford Union and the electors of Deptford. At disarming and convincing opponents he was more successful than Shaw. Mr. Ensor's essay is easily the best in the book. He refutes, crushingly, the cruel satire of H. G. Wells on the Webb *salon*. His own strictures are brilliantly convincing. Sidney, he says, could not climb the front stairs to political success because his genius was for the back stairs. He was a bad judge of men, and he often failed to see the bigness of big issues. Beatrice shared these faults. Both wildly underrated Keir Hardie. Not until 1914 did they commence putting their weight behind the Labour Party. The precepts of Haldane—who might have married Beatrice—had previously led them to the mistake of becoming followers first of Rosebery, then of Asquith. Yet personally they could get on with Asquith no better than with Lloyd George. They antagonised the Radicals, "who after all were the only people through whom Socialism could look for popular support." By contrast with Mr. Ensor, J. S. Middleton is dull and inadequate on Webb and the Labour Party, an opportunity missed. Jack Lawson suggests the profound effect that both Sidney and Beatrice had on the

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miners and their wives when Sidney sat for Seaham. Sir Drummond Shiels recalls that Sidney as Colonial Secretary (1929–1931) was a planner but no fighter, too lightly pushed aside in the Cabinet by other ministers with their competing projects. With subordinates he was too modest and tolerant. Ten years in the Colonial Office as a young man had bred in him overmuch faith in the civil service expert. But the Empire could thank him for his handling of native policy in East Africa, and of penal reform in all the African colonies; most of all for his part in the unifying of the Colonial Service.

For the Webbs, the fall of Labour in 1931 was a release. It brought them directly into the last, boldest, and least predictable phase of their partnership. Beatrice had for years been studying Russian events and collecting Soviet documents. In 1932 they were able to go and see for themselves. A short summer visit overwhelmed them both. Here, to their eyes, was the emergence of a new civilisation. Leonard Woolf and John Parker agree that their admiration of the Soviets followed logically from their belief in the supreme importance of social structure and function. They had indeed always been concerned with the system, not the citizen, with the machinery not the psychology of civilisation. Fabianism, they now more than ever decided, was too gradual. A revolutionary organisation of society on Socialist lines appeared as the only way out of chaos. While not blind to "the disease of orthodoxy" in Russia, to the secret police and the disregard of human rights and sufferings, they took these to be irrelevancies, outweighed by the positive results. Desmond MacCarthy stresses how fanatical was Beatrice in her new faith. Kingsley Martin records the absorption of them both, during their last years, in the study of Soviet Socialism; although he thinks that misgivings about the U.S.S.R. came to Beatrice before the end. He was a frequent visitor to Passfield Corner, and calls up a telling picture of Saturday evenings by the fireside there—the meaty, well ordered talk; the fine hands of Beatrice and Sidney's large plumed cockatoo's head; and the volatile terrier, Sandy—he bit Beatrice at the last. If Beatrice had philosophic doubts and sought after a personal religion, the Webbs nevertheless had the pleasures of retirement, the sense of things accomplished. Above all, they were together, undistracted. The world had borrowed from them, and left them rich.

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GIRLS AND BOYS

WHAT a time children do have, any reader of their books might be justified in thinking. Stepmothers, if any, are charming; teachers, to quote one author, "wizard." Nothing seems out of reach, from aeroplane rides to film contracts. And the insouciance of their parents! Off they go to Foreign Parts, making the flimsiest of arrangements for their family's welfare. Yes, but something is missing; without a few rules to be broken, a few first-class tyrants to be defied, where is your story? (I perceive, for instance, not a single tale set in a Progressive School.) And aren't these children a little stodgy, a little hard to distinguish, one from another? Still, that good idea of being on the side of the Law repairs some of the damage done by easy conditions and understanding adults, and explains why even the most disagreeable child ends up, as likely as not, by unmasking a black marketeer or turning in a deserter.

Mr. Geoffrey Trease (whose book contains a ravishing headmistress) mixes these ingredients with style and without unpleasantness in his day-school story *No Boats on Bannermere* (Heinemann, 8*s*. 6*d*.). Up in Cumberland it all happens. "I don't *look* as if I'd grow into an author," complains the chief boy, a would-be writer. "I'm not pale with long dark hair and brooding eyes. I'm pink, with hair of no special colour." Better still, he is not ashamed to be seen out with his sister. Against Mr. Trease's boys and girls that false Squire Sir Alfred (whom they can't find in the Army List) hasn't a chance in his archaeological dark projects; but the most sinister touch of imagination is not in the unearthed skeleton or the dark shadow on the aerial photograph, but in that school dinner of toad-in-the-hole and semolina, consumed at long trestle tables. No such liberties are taken with the squirearchy in M. E. Allan's *Trouble at Melville Manor* (Museum Press, 6*s*.), where a family of children, including a writing-girl, a horse-child and a Real Boy go to stay with their uncle Sir Garth Melville, in his ancestral mansion. "I'm hoping great things from you all," says Sir Garth. "Do you think you can turn my Bethan into a sport, instead of a sulky, bad-tempered, thoroughly unpleasant little girl? If all five of you do your best to make her jolly and sporting I shall feel a great load off my mind." Small wonder that Ray replies: "It's—it's asking a lot"; small wonder than Bethan, a dark beauty with a gorgeous wardrobe, puts up a stiff resistance. Alas, she disappoints us in the end, but not before she has led us a fine dance up long galleries, down secret passages, over the hills on a magnificent black horse, and finally through a positively Arctic blizzard.

Jocelyn Brooke's *The Wonderful Summer* (John Lehmann, 7*s*. 6*d*.), is spent in Oxfordshire, which is rather less interesting than the castled North. It has three preoccupations. One is orchid-hunting. Another is food: I have never come across such a range and frequency of meals as in this nourishing book. The third is fireworks; and I must warn adults that instructions are given for making them at home. But the children, who are modishly called Jon and Penelope, are the usual sort, bouncing and undistinguished, to my mind not deserving their good luck in the last chapter. More of these careless parents account for the extremely unusual adventures of Nan Chauncy's *They Found a Cave* (Oxford, 6*s*.). Evacuated to Tasmania, the children flee from a brutal farmer and his wife and make their home for several months in a mountain cave, where they keep goats, do a little hunting, and learn, I imagine, a great deal about primitive cookery. It is a very healthy book.

"What kind of woman was Aunt Cordelia?" runs the dust-cover of Elisabeth Kyle's *The House on the Hill* (Peter Davies, 8*s*. 6*d*.). What indeed? When she hears that her three nephews and nieces are coming to stay with her, she goes off to have a final fling with her gipsy friends in Nightingale Wood. The children have any amount of trouble in rescuing her from the wrong tribe, as well as in doing the housekeeping (which, I am glad to say, they share very fairly) in the lonely cottage. I would like to commend the good sense of a governessy character early in the story, who "thought the children might sound more attractive if written about on really good paper," and sets out her letter accordingly.

All these are "mixed" books. For boys alone—boys of orthodox tastes, that is (are there any such now?) there is *Dauntless and the Mary Baines* (Oxford, 8*s*. 6*d*.), a rattling story by Peter Dawlish, full of technical details, about boats. While the pages are thick with coastguards, tarpaulins, rockets, hawsers, binnacles and bollards, they do not contain a single female under—I should judge—sixty. Mary Baines is not a girl but a coastal steamer. Exclusively feminine, on the other hand, is Kathleen Wallace's *Cross the Bridge and See* (Heinemann, 8*s*. 6*d*.), repellingly described as a "a book for the teen-ager by a popular writer of adult fiction." It is set in China, an idyllic and golden country with just a hint of unspecified "trouble" in the dim political distance. Kay, the heroine, is one of those tall brown girls who are awkward at parties but good at a career; her mother is a charming lady who observes: "People who belong to the land are always the nicest people in any country or any race"; her father is a doctor called Stephen Sherlock; their best friends are a delightful Chinese family, closely related, I should add, to the Ambassador. It seems churlish to raise a querying eyebrow—but all those happy coolies, those laughing rickshaw bearers? Of course, tough children of either gender may prefer to any of these novels Miss Evelyn Cheeseman's *Camping Adventures on Cannibal Islands* (Harrap, 7*s*. 6*d*.).

Nursery fare has, on the whole, as well as prettier pictures, a wildness of fancy that borders on the surrealist, and a belief in plain virtue that is most reassuring. *The Idle Gardener*, by Francis Berrill (Oxford, 6s.), is an agreeable tale of animals transporting flowers and vegetables to a good little boy's garden, while his father, the industrious gardener, lies ill with a broken leg. The rabbit heroine of Margaret Ross's *Minty Bramble's House in the Woods* (Museum Press, 6s.), a book full of lusciously coloured illustrations, is a sort of Cinderella. Mrs. Tucker, her aunt, "was in high spirits when she came home from the Ball, for she had found husbands for all her beautiful daughters." But Minty will before long meet a Royal Hare who reads Brer Rabbit. Monica Walker's *The Educated Pig* (Oxford, 5s.) is a thoughtful creature who attends the village school and wins a University scholarship. The students (from the drawing) appear to resent this though, as the author points out, he is as clever as they, and "certainly more neat and clean and attractive."

Animals, however kindly is the writer's attitude, lead rather ignoble and sentimentalised lives in children's fiction. It is pleasant, then, to read *Tuck* by Alfred Flückiger (Bodley Head, 8s. 6d.), a gracefully told story of a snow hare, for it contains not a single human nor a human emotion from birth to mating. *Snow White*, by Jan Vlasak and Josef Seget (Hodge, 12s. 6d.) is a very interesting account of the successful rearing of a polar bear cub in captivity, illustrated by extremely attractive photographs. NAOMI LEWIS

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> There is no need for the writer to eat a whole sheep to be able to tell you what mutton tastes like. It is enough if he eats a cutlet. *But he should do that.*

The italics of the last, powerful and operative phrase are mine. Mr. Maugham lies between the whole sheep eaters and the Lotus eaters: he has kept, wisely, to the moralist's cutlet.

And so, his notebooks—the random collection of a lifetime's moralisings, epigrams, portraits of people, jottings for stories, descriptions of scenes, which a novelist is bound to keep, hoping that they will be eventually useful—are as agreeable to read as any of his set pieces. Uncertain and sententious in his early years, at the time of moral crisis, they quickly grow into the familiar manner, so suave and yet with the fine cutting edge, when the success he confidently expected arrives. What is lacking is the transforming passion which is the impulse of creative writing; what is always active: his integrity as a writer. Honesty has been his vanity as an author—his desire, like Mérimée's, is neither to dupe nor to be duped—and his honesty has been, one suspects, a desire to get questions settled and to make time and place for the continuous demands of his talents. That is to say he is probably more ruthless than honest, a practical rather than a seeking moralist. One has only to compare his notes with Gide's—though we must admit the difference between a journal of private life and a writer's working notes—to see that Maugham's are of the kind that seal off or put an end to what he is discussing:

> It may be that it is the I in us which is the cause of our wickedness, but it is the cause too of our music, our painting, our poetry. And so what?

or

> I don't know why it is that the religious never ascribe common sense to God.

Again, to compare him with two other note-takers: Jules Renard, whose *Journal* led Mr. Maugham, albeit with humility, to publish these notes, and with Henry James. To the former Mr. Maugham denies creative power, by which he means the power to enlarge his material. This seems to me a narrow use of the words: Gide came closer to Renard when he said that Renard was "not a stream but a distillery." And of fierce spirits, indeed. Of course, Renard lacked invention, and yet, to judge by the quarrels caused by his *Journal*, he was thought inventive enough. There is a creative power which is in the seeing and which may amount to a reduction and not an enlargement of the subject. It is a dangerous argument to say that Renard's theories were simply justifications of his shortcomings as a "novelist" who was obliged, by lack of invention, to stick to his own experience. The originality of many writers has come from the bold use of their weaknesses. The bad writers are those who have never known their own limits or weaknesses, and have never had the patience and the art to turn them to account.

Nor, after Renard, shall we find in Mr. Maugham's notes those ecstatic soliloquies of Henry James, crooning alone in his room among his precious particles, his *données* and *dénouements*, and comically caught in the tremendous mystification of moving, say, Maisie from Sir Claude to Mrs. Wix, and then, in sublime infatuation, back again. Mr. Maugham's notes have a natural lack of such intimacies. Like his epigrams, his notes close doors. What went on in his imagination when he used this note or that we shall not know until we make the jump from fact to invention.

He is a well-mannered writer. What he writes, even if it is only a note, is finished and well done. It can be perfunctory: forty years later this became *The Colonel's Lady*:

> They were talking about V.F. whom they'd all known. She published a volume of passionate love poems, obviously not addressed to her husband. It made them laugh to think that she'd carried on a long affair under his nose, and they'd have given anything to know what he felt when at last he read them.

Or extensive, but factual, like the original note for *Rain*. Here is one passage:

> The lodging house. It is a two storey frame house with verandas on both floors, and it is about five minutes walk from the dock, on the Broad Road, and faces the sea. Below is a store in which are sold canned goods, pork and beans, beef, hamburger steak, canned asparagus, peaches and apricots, and cotton goods, lava-lavas, hats, raincoats and the like. The owner is a half-caste with a native wife surrounded by little brown children. The rooms are almost bare of furniture, a poor iron bed with a ragged mosquito curtain, a ricketty chair and a washstand. The rain rattles down on the corrugated iron roof. No meals are provided.

That description has been a little cut for the story. The portraits of the tart, the missionary and his wife have been taken almost word for word from the notes.

Like most novelists, Maugham has not used the greater part of his notes. They are the environment rather than the material, and they disclose that part of a writer which is really the traveller, the cutlet-eater. The portraits are of two kinds: those of people so immediately interesting that, maddeningly, they are complete and there is nothing to be done with them; those of uninteresting people, the decent man, the pleasant woman whom the author feverishly catalogues hoping to overcome his repugnance to the normal, hypnotised by a hopeless attraction to it. For the featureless presents a challenge to the novelist. Cannot he provoke one phrase? There is the Flemish innkeeper with "his fat, tardy laugh." That was worth catching. A shy and difficult acquaintance, he produced, heavily and slowly, this apology for consulting his wife before he agreed to serve his customer: "*Il faut bien que je la demande puisque je couche avec.*" There is a description of a scene in a makeshift hospital in France in 1914, which is as powerful as any of Whitman's notes on the Civil War, and leaves one with the regret that Mr. Maugham, whose real subject has always been pain, should have drifted away to the sociable and the bizarre. The gain to urbanity has been a loss to passion. Two other grim sets of notes, those on the convict settlement in Martinique (the scene of one of his best stories of the middle period) and on life in Bermondsey before the war, confirm the impression.

> Bermondsey. Dan has been out of work for months. He is miserable and humiliated, and his brother Bert, who is in work, bullies him. He throws it in Dan's face that he keeps him. To take it out of him he makes him do odd jobs for him. Dan is so wretched that he feels he'd like to make an end of himself, and it requires all his mother's persuasion to get him to wait till something turns up. The mother, Mrs. Bailey, is a charwoman who works in a Government office in Whitehall. She goes out at six in the morning and doesn't get back till six at night. One day Bert comes home and because Dan hasn't fetched his other shirt from the laundry and he wants to go out, he swears at him. They have a fight and Dan, smaller, weaker, ill fed, gets a thrashing. Mrs. Bailey comes in and stops the fight. She roundly abuses Bert. He says he's sick of it all and he's going to be married. They are horrified; without his week's money, with Dan earning nothing, it's impossible for Mrs. Bailey to support herself, Dan and the two younger children. It means starvation. They tell Bert he can't get married, at least not till Dan gets work; he says he must, his girl's going to have a baby. He flings out. They are all crying. Mrs. Bailey goes down on her knees and makes the others, Dan and the two children, do so too, and she prays God to have mercy on them and help them. They are still praying when Bert comes back with the shirt he has just fetched for himself. He looks at them angrily.
>
> "Oh, all right, all right," he shouts. "I'll give her ten bob to get rid of the little bastard."

The Bermondsey novel was never written; the interesting thing about that note is its intimate, factual accuracy, the lack of any spoiling suggestion from a view of art that would be hostile to it. But seeing these few Bermondsey pages among the innumerable comments on travel in the East, in Russia and America, among the sea of faces which Mr. Maugham has put down, it is hard to see how they could have stood their ground among the distractions of civility. Mainly Mr. Maugham has been drawn to the romantic disappointment, and not to the tragedy where no illusion or expectation lay in the first place.

Dozens of notes in this book bring to mind the seriousness of Mr. Maugham's vocation, the austerity that lies within the worldliness. His description of Kerensky during the revolution is a brilliant piece of character-drawing and one of the most direct accounts of the beginning of the upheaval that I have ever read. His richness, at his best, is like Mérimée's (I don't quite understand how the comparison with Maupassant was ever made; the notes contain an amusing attack on Maupassant and Turgenev and a surprising defence of Chehov which he has let stand, though now his opinion is very different). For like Mérimée he is masked, if not altogether self-effacing; and in observation he is like a cool hunter. He is far less an aesthete than Mérimée and, of course, no poet; he believes that the value of art is to be judged by "the right action," to which, in the philosopher's sense it leads; but, like Mérimée, he injects irony to close subjects, to paralyse wounds. His notes do not add, for this reason, a new sensation to our lives, or open us to new experience. They suggest, rather, the price he has paid for his. It is a tribute to the quickness of his curiosity that they should have the immediate and diverse readableness of his finished work.

V. S. PRITCHETT

* *A Writer's Notebook.* By W. Somerset Maugham. Heinemann. 12s. 6d.

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The Socialist Tragedy. By IVOR THOMAS. *Latimer House.* 10*s.* 6*d.*

The advance towards full parliamentary democracy, and the consequent growth of the Party machine, have brought a shift in the ethics of the practising politician. The Member of Parliament, as Mr. Hollis points out in his entertaining book, and as the case history of Mr. Ivor Thomas demonstrates, is moving away from the standards laid down by Edmund Burke. But what threatens his freedom to-day is not the angry roar of his constituents, but the quiet pressure of a Party machine, without whose endorsement as a candidate he has little chance of success in the career on which, if he is a professional, his living increasingly depends.

After four years in the House of Commons, Mr. Hollis—himself an old-fashioned amateur—is dismayed both by the impotence of the Member as an individual, and by the inability of Parliament as a whole to carry out the immense tasks thrust upon it. He is far too sensible to overlook the necessity for Party discipline in a modern democracy, but he resents professionalism as the breeding-ground of sycophancy and hypocrisy. He recognises that, in 1949, Parliament cannot exert the leisurely control of expenditure of 1849, just as it cannot retain the virtues of aristocracy and amateur politics in an age of streamlined democracy. Yet he feels strongly that the present tendencies are leading us into a managerial society, in which Parliamentary Government, and even Cabinet Government will degenerate into myths concealing the fact that power has actually been concentrated into a few irresponsible hands. His analysis of these tendencies leads him into an attack not on Socialism but on Parliament as such, and a plea for a brand new Parliament of Industry, along the lines suggested in the 1920's by the Webbs, though they, of course, conceived it as part of a Socialist system.

I cannot say that I was impressed by Mr. Hollis's Parliament of Industry. Indeed it seems odd that the remedy proposed by a Conservative should be a new institution, rather than an adaptation of existing institutions to changing circumstances. Granted, for instance, that it is a grave defect to set nationalised industries completely outside Parliamentary control, is not Mr. Molson's recent proposal for restoring that control through the creation of Select Committees more constructive, and more likely to restore a measure of independence to the Member, than the idea that we should shove into the British Constitution a brand new piece of legislative machinery? And yet I am sure that Mr. Hollis is right in his hunch that, during the next ten years, constitutional issues will be at least as important as economic; and this argument could be reinforced by examples drawn from the ossified chaos of Local Government. The wheel has come almost full circle: the mechanism of government now needs as much attention from the reformer as the mechanism of production and exchange. The Socialist politician should turn his eyes upon the conduct of his own profession, and criticise the political institutions, which he so easily assumes to be sacred and untouchable, with all the severity which he applies to the capitalist system. We need a new Bagehot, to compare the theory of parliamentary democracy, including its high-flown Burkian ideals, with the humdrum routine of the loyal oxen treading the Division mill.

In his studies, our new Bagehot would perhaps give a passing glance to Mr. Ivor Thomas. For a full-blooded conversion to Conservatism is sufficiently rare to warrant attention. What were its springs of action? Through what stages did the disillusionment proceed? What precipitated the final act of resignation? Mr. Thomas is a man of high academic distinction. He is clever enough to be fully conscious of his own motives and therefore, if he wished, could become an important witness on the ethics of parliamentary politics and the problem of liberty under a party machine.

But he does not so wish. *The Socialist Tragedy* contains a photograph of the author, but otherwise, by intent at least, reveals little of his personality. It is an anti-Socialist tract, which blends the theoretical approach of Hayek with the knock-about fun of Sir Ernest Benn. The argument is in the form of that well-known syllogism: Communism means the total elimination of private property; Socialism leads straight to Communism; *ergo*, Mr. Attlee *really* indulges in free love. *The Socialist Tragedy* spares us nothing. Mr. Thomas quotes Mr. Churchill's "Gestapo" speech with warm approval, compares Mr. Strachey's food subsidies with Roman bread-and-circuses, and finds the Labour Party's attachment "to a single official newspaper an ominous sign" of incipient totalitarianism.

In his first chapter, "The Fading of a Dream," Mr. Thomas circumspectly observes that his book is "in no sense an *apologia pro vita sua*. It is not intended to be an autobiographical sketch of a political conversion. The precise stages by which the conclusions of this book were reached are not so important as the conclusions themselves." To put it mildly, this is a misjudgment of his public. The book which Mr. Thomas has actually given us had been churned out many times by many authors, while he was still a loyal member of the Labour Party; the book he could have written would have been unique. Here is a young Welshman, who earned his way to Oxford honours by scholarships; learnt his journalism on *The Times*, and practised it in the editorial columns of the *News Chronicle*; achieved public fame by very nearly beating Sir John Simon in Spen Valley; and became one of the small body of Labour intellectuals, along with Douglas Jay and Hugh Gaitskell, who enjoyed the full confidence of the Labour Party's National Executive. So complete was this confidence that during the war, with Mr. Attlee's personal encouragement, he was selected to fight a safe seat at a by-election, and rumour has it that, when his name was not included in the first rough draft of the 1945 Ministry, he only needed to remind the Prime Minister of his qualifications to obtain an Under-Secretaryship. Failure at the Ministry of Civil Aviation brought him promotion to the Colonial Office, where his keen opposition to the Jewish State seemed to mark him out for further success. But then came one of those sudden reversals of fortune which make professional politics such a tricky game. Mr. Thomas became the innocent casualty in a minor Cabinet reshuffle, and a few months later crossed the floor.

In the Labour Party there were few politicians more professional than Mr. Thomas. "I had no strong ideological views," he writes in the only autobiographical passage; and again, "I studiously avoided calling myself a Socialist." Here, in truth, was the paragon of professionalism—a man free from any partisan adherence to principles and eager only to serve in any office for which he was selected. What unmerited peripeteia caused his downfall on the very threshold of success?

It may be that Mr. Thomas's undoing was an excess of professionalism. Elected on a Socialist programme for which he felt no ideological attachment, Mr. Thomas showed his loyalty to the Party machine by suppressing his doubts; and he received his reward. The crisis came when the reward was arbitrarily removed and he was left without either office or Socialist convictions. Without any pretence of hesitation, he proffered his services to another master. Will Mr. Churchill question his loyalty, any more than Mr. Attlee, if Mr. Thomas, in the changed situation, studiously avoids calling himself a Conservative? Not if he defeats the Labour Member for Newport and continues, in his own words, to "consider each question on its merits" by asking, "Is the Bolshevik Revolution being enacted in Great Britain in slow motion?" In modern politics, the professional with "no strong ideological views" is worthy of his hire—on either side.

R. H. S. CROSSMAN

NEW NOVELS

Time of Hope. By C. P. SNOW. *Faber.* 12*s.* 6*d.*

The Sheltering Sky. By PAUL BOWLES. *John Lehmann.* 10*s.* 6*d.*

In 1940 there appeared a novel, called *Strangers and Brothers*, which was remarkable not only for its quality, but for its unusual combination of form, method and material. Its form was tragic, its method traditional, and it dealt with English people who were living, and had jobs in England, and were not professional derelicts, on holiday in Italy, or living in the future, the Edwardian past, or Hollywood. Mr. Snow displayed an unfashionable grasp of the mundane, of jobs and salaries and committees and legal processes. His peculiar gift lay in applying to this material not merely the acute and intelligent observation of the worldly, but a comprehension which was both imaginative and compassionate. His style, although dealing in the language of the highly educated, avoided the mandarin; the only thing which could be said against it was that, although plain and workmanlike in narrative, it was occasionally mannered in dialogue.

Strangers and Brothers was followed by *The Light and The Dark*, which was the second of the series of novels which Mr. Snow is writing, and which are connected by the personality of their narrator, Lewis Eliot. This book was very highly, and almost unanimously, praised. But it was not, I think, so good a novel as *Strangers and Brothers*. Its main theme was spiritual and not temporal, and in writing upon this theme Mr. Snow gave the impression of employing his admirable technical resources to cover a basic uneasiness. The strain appeared not only when he was handling this theme directly, but in a marked increase in his use of a phrase or style of conversation to drive home the personality of a particular character. Only in that part of the book which dealt with the election to the Mastership of a Cambridge College did Mr. Snow display to the full the easy, masculine force, the understanding, at once subtle and robust, which distinguished *Strangers and Brothers*.

Time of Hope is Lewis Eliot's own story, the story of his childhood and youth, his early struggles at the Bar, the beginning of success, and of his love and marriage. Eliot is born into "the rag tag and bobtail of the lower middle class" in a medium-sized provincial town. Clever, able and resourceful, quietly but imperatively ambitious, he is enabled by a small legacy and the help of George Passant, (the central figure of *Strangers and Brothers*) to pass his Bar examinations and make his way into the Chambers of Francis Getliffe. He is hampered by illness as well as poverty; living is a desperate business of two-guinea briefs, cheap digs, and sandwiches. But this is the time of hope, and the sense which this book conveys is not that of the fears and the difficulties, but rather of the power and the glory, of youth, ability, and ambition. It is not, in fact, the difficulties of his origins and of his poverty that stand between Lewis Eliot and the reward of his gifts. It is the character of the girl with whom he is in love, Sheila Knight. This girl, at first merely "difficult," and gradually revealed as abnormal, is both the vessel and the instrument of the sense of tragedy which Mr. Snow revealed in *Strangers and Brothers*, and of which he is in full command in *Time of Hope*. In a book which is marked by an astonishing cumulative weight and vividness of characterisation, the character of Sheila Knight stands out because of the menacing demand which it makes upon our apprehension and sympathy. For behind a story which is elaborate and full of incident, we know what the end must be: it is the end of the time of hope. Lewis will not achieve his ambitions, and his wife is an impediment to him, but he loves her and cannot abandon her. This ending, which is

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"I have never" says Sir Patrick Hastings, K.C., "been able to feel the slightest sympathy for a woman who leaves her child, nor for the husband who uses his child as a weapon against his wife. In the many hundreds of cases I have known, the child has appeared to me as a pawn in the matrimonial game, and my only interest has been as to his *possible* future." This novel sets out to determine that *possible* future, and Cecilie Leslie, author of *Goat to Kali*, shows with understanding and conviction how a struggle between two people on a matter of highest principle, can through confusion of motive and the power of selfishness, degenerate into a personal wrangle which finds its solution in a pitiful revenge. 9/6 net

implicit in the title, and which we foresee in the distance, is nevertheless finally presented with intense dramatic force, which is heightened by simplicity and restraint, and is extremely moving. It is the ending of a novel in which Mr. Snow has eliminated his weaknesses, extended his creative power, and established himself, on his own chosen ground, in an eminent and conspicuous position among contemporary English novelists.

Published by John Lehmann, and chosen as the *Evening Standard* Book of the Month, *The Sheltering Sky* appears under distinguished auspices. And it opens well, engaging the attention by very good "atmosphere" and a light but decisive touch in creating character and situation. It does not take Mr. Bowles many pages to show that he is both an accomplished and a serious novelist, and one waits to see what he intends to do. The scene is set in French Morocco. Between the three young Americans, Port and Kit Moresby and their friend Tunner, there is an engagingly ambiguous relationship, complicated by their becoming involved with two ghastly English people who are travelling through the same part of the country. There is plenty of incident, but even after a good deal of it one is not sure what Mr. Bowles is getting at, and the publishers' suggestion that he is dealing with "those depths of the human mind where the forces of despair and distintegration are at work" is, I think, misleading. The major incidents—Kit's infidelity, the death of Port, Kit's flight into the desert—are disturbing and pathetic, but they reveal the behaviour, not so much of despairing adults, as of lost bewildered children. The misery, loneliness, and petulance of the immature brought into contact with a hostile adult world—that, rather than the more dignified and fashionable despair and disintegration, seems to me to be Mr. Bowles' theme. That, at any rate, is what he sometimes brilliantly conveys. This is a rather puzzling book, and I think that whatever interpretation one puts upon it there are some jarring false notes. Yet it is a book worth a bit of puzzling, worth discussing, and worth re-reading.

J. D. Scott

JAMES AT THE PLAY

The Scenic Art. By Henry James. Edited by Allen Wade. *Rupert Hart-Davis.* 21s.

Even without the ill-fated episode of his direct assault on the theatre, one would have known of Henry James's passionate interest in the drama from his prefaces, letters and note books. "Dramatise, dramatise, dramatise!" is the advice he constantly gives to himself whenever he is stuck in one of his novels. And those ideals of form and pattern, which, as a novelist, he was so passionately pursuing, derived directly from the formal structure of the Play. The novel and the drama were for him but two branches of fiction. And after reading *The Scenic Art*, a collection of his writings on acting and the drama, I was left lamenting the rift which seems to have grown up between literature and stage. Henry James noted and deplored the beginning of a split which in our age of specialisation has grown so much wider with obvious damage to both arts. If only our more sensitive and original novelists with their command over language could infuse into their books a more robust play of drama! If only our dramatists could work into their plays more sensitivity, more originality and some command over the resources of our tongue!

The split, James notices, is an English phenomenon; in the France, of his day at least, the theatre was an integral part of what was meant by French civilisation. Not to go to the theatre, he implies in the most revealing essays devoted to his theatre-going in Paris, would have been unthinkable for a person with any pretensions to being interested in the life of his time. Here, alas, we ordered things differently. For crossing to England straight from the Parisian Theatre, James notes the difference between the view of drama in the two capitals—the theatre in England is a social luxury: in France it is an artistic necessity. He goes on in this brilliant discursive essay "The London Theatres" (1877) to analyse the difference between the two audiences:

> An English audience is as different as possible from a French, though the difference is altogether by no means to its disadvantage. It is much more "genteel"; it is less Bohemian, less blasé, more naif and more respectful—to say nothing of being made up of handsomer people. It is well-dressed, tranquil, motionless; it suggests domestic virtue and comfortable homes; it looks as if it had come to the play in its own carriage, after a dinner of beef and pudding.
>
> A Parisian audience on the other hand is:
>
> Cynical, sceptical, indifferent; it is so intimately used to the theatre that it doesn't stand on ceremony . . . it has seen too much and it knows too much. But it has the critical and the artistic sense when the occasion appeals to them, it can judge and discriminate. It has the sense of form and manner; it heeds and cares how things are done, even when it cares little for the things themselves . . . They do not strike one as "nice people" in the same degree as a collection of English patrons of the drama, but they form a natural sympathetic public while the English audience forms only a conventional, accidental one. It may be that the drama and other works of art are best appreciated by people who are not "nice," it may be that a lively interest in such matters tends to undermine niceness; it may be that, as the world grows nicer, various forms of art will grow feebler . . .

James's taste and judgment were formed by a prolonged soaking in the art of the *Comédie Française*. He recognised that much that was done there was of little account: but with what style, form, precision, skill, professionalism in a word, it was done! Behind every gesture and movement there was the long tradition, the thorough knowledge of technique and, in the supreme artists, of life too. Perfection of form was always what he was after and he saw it exhibited as far as drama was concerned once and for all in the *Maison de Molière*. Coming to England straight from that he could never consider our actors, even the best of them, as anything but talented amateurs. For three-quarters of the art—it is a note that badly needs sounding again—consisted in the use of the voice; on that account alone he would never allow Irving, ("Who is so meagre in the essential and so redundant in the [relatively] superfluous") more praise than such as slipped into the clauses qualifying his condemnation of the actor's way of speaking.

The bulk of the volume consists, then, in placing the tradition of acting in the French Theatre as *the* standard and using it as a yardstick; and alongside this there are evocations of great acting, Coquelin, and Salvini, and the better known studies of Ibsen, Dumas Fils and Rostand. Among the minor pleasures of the volume are his estimate of certain figures over the years—for the essays extend in time from 1872 to 1901. As an example Sarah Bernhardt briefly enters first in 1876 as "that very interesting actress." Next she is coupled with Mlle. Croizette as one of the two actresses whom it takes to fill the place of Madame Plessy who was retiring. "Clever as these young ladies are, they will not fill the void." Later in the year she becomes "the extremely exceptional" and it is said of her (it is hardly the frankest of praise) "It would be hard to imagine a more brilliant embodiment of feminine success." In 1879 this judgment is amplified:

> . . . Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt is not, to my sense, a celebrity because she is an artist. She is a celebrity because, apparently, she desires with an intensity that has rarely been equalled to be one, and because for this end all means are alike to her . . . the trade of a celebrity, pure and simple, had been invented, I think, before she came to London; if it had not been it is certain she would have discovered it. She is in a supreme degree, what the French call the *génie de la réclame*—the advertising genius . . . Charming as are some of her gifts, peculiar and picturesque as is her whole artistic personality, it cannot in the least be said

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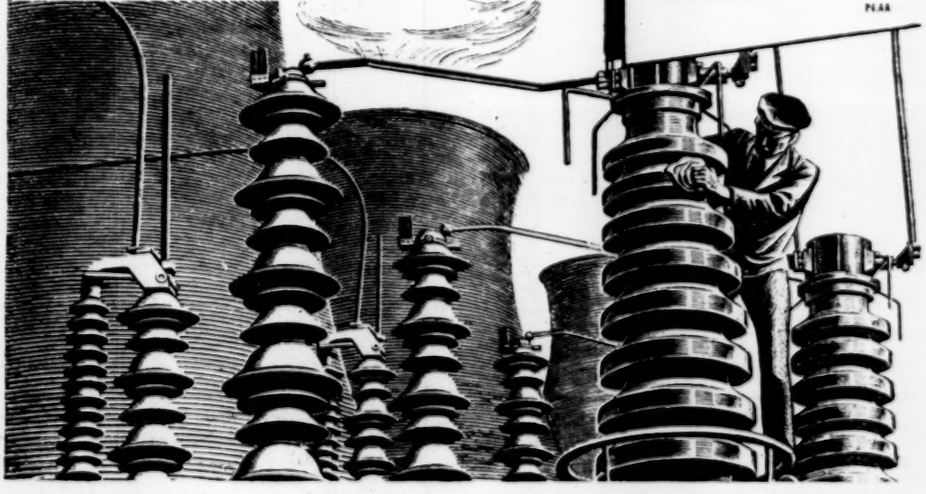

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that she is a consummate actress or even what the French call a real comédienne.

The manner of this judgment (never much modified) may surprise readers who accept the popular view of James as a prize muffler by its downright direction, its violence of attack. This side of him can be paralleled in many hard hitting passages; and I cannot resist quoting another sentence from a late essay which demonstrates that he was less squeamish about the moral question, than is commonly supposed. It comes from the essay on "Dumas the Younger" (1895) and he is discussing the different attitudes to sex of the English and the French. "The next real difference, I take it, (he writes) is that whereas we like to be good the French like to be better. We like to be moral, they like to moralise." And then he describes Dumas's own particular attitude:

> One of his great contentions is, for instance, that seduced girls should under all circumstances be married—by somebody or other, failing the seducer. This is essentially a contention that, as we feel, barely concerns us, shut up as we are in the antecedent conviction that they should under no circumstances be seduced.

Wit, intelligence, the most discriminating apparatus of appreciation, a breadth of reference and a depth of feeling for the pleasures and rewards of art—it is refreshing to find this combination of qualities applied to the art of the Theatre. James's writing is more direct and hard in these dramatic criticisms than anywhere else in his work though it is true that by comparison with the headline obviousness of us, his successors, he still demands alertness in the reader. Given that, these pieces bristle with interest, with what he might have called glimpses into the secret places of art, hints of the fruitful attitude and suggestions for the critical approach.

T. C. WORSLEY

PRUFROCK TO THE QUARTETS

The Art of T. S. Eliot. By HELEN GARDNER. *Cresset Press.* 12*s.* 6*d.*

Over thirty years ago, in *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, Mr. Eliot pointed out that a work of art had power to alter the past. The introduction of the really new work modified, however slightly, the ideal order of the existing monuments; it threw its own light on them, revealing new facets, angles, and perspectives. In this view, poets and poems are not a series of milestones, of which a new great work is the latest; they are more to be compared to a dance, with the figures forever breaking up and reforming as new dancers join in; or to a garden, whose existing harmonies of space and colour may be modified by the flowering of one plant. Mr. Eliot's own poems have demonstrated the truth of this view, in two fields. His poetry as a whole has modified the existing order of English poetry, and has thrown its own light on the poems of earlier centuries; and his own later poems have modified the order of his earlier. Ten years ago it was common enough for critics and readers to divide his work into two groups, with the break coming somewhere between *The Waste Land* and *Ash Wednesday*. Now, looking back from the *Four Quartets*, we can see the underlying unity, the recurrence of certain images, situations, preoccupations. *Prufrock* and *Sweeney* give perspective to the *Quartets:* the *Dry Salvages* adds depth to *Prufrock*. Only perhaps after we have followed the later meditations on human time and "time not our time," can we fully understand that *Prufrock* also is a poem about two kinds of time.

Up till now the most considerable commentary on Eliot's poetry has been F. O. Matthiessen's *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot*. Through his discussion of myth, tradition, the "objective correlative," Professor Matthiessen made better readers of us all. But that was fourteen years ago; before the *Quartets* and *The Family Reunion*. A new commentary was needed to chart, not only the new works, but the new order they imposed on the old. This need Miss Gardner most brilliantly supplies. She begins where Professor Matthiessen had to leave off; with the *Quartets*. From them she goes back to the early poems, *The Waste Land*, *Ash Wednesday* and the plays, and finally back to the *Quartets* again, to re-examine them in the light of what has gone before. Some idea of her method and scope may be gained by comparing what she and Professor Matthiessen have to say about the same passage. Here is Professor Matthiessen on the last section of *Ash Wednesday*, with its moving and beautiful pictures of the white sails flying seaward, the lost lilac, the bent golden-rod. "He is momentarily forgetful of the penance of humility appointed for Ash Wednesday; for he has been lured back to the human realm of desire and loss by the enchantment of the senses." And here is Miss Gardner: "There is an acceptance of natural human weakness. The extraordinary lyrical beauty with which the revival of the senses and of the desire of the heart is expressed is untroubled by remorse or a sense of shame." Professor Matthiessen notes the obvious tension between the demands of a supernatural order and the enchantment of the senses. Miss Gardner, with the *Quartets* fresh in her mind, can penetrate to the deeper level on which these tensions are reconciled, where an acceptance of "time not our time" can restore meaning and savour to things most rooted in time and place. In the same way, *The Hollow Men* is greatly illumined by this backward glance: the birth and death passage is seen to pre-figure the third movement of each *Quartet*, which dwells on the point where descent becomes ascent; and the "Eyes I dare not meet in dreams" take us forward to the eyes of the Eumenides in *The Family Reunion*.

To her work of elucidation Miss Gardner brings a wide and fruitful reading, a familiarity with Mr. Eliot's prose writings, an ear most responsive to verbal music, and a sensibility to meanings as acute as her sensibility to rhythms. With no ostentation or pedantry, she can produce an illuminating parallel from *Piers Plowman*, or a quotation from the fourteenth-century mystic Walter Hilton apt to the last section of *The Dry Salvages*. She is very good indeed on the music of poetry, on the counterpoint of music and meaning, and on what Mr. Eliot has called the "feeling for syllable and rhythm, penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling". The rhythm of the opening of *The Dry Salvages* recalls to her the accentual hexameters of Longfellow's *Evangeline;* and at once the measure is seen to take its part in the pattern of images drawn from the poet's St. Louis childhood.

There have been studies of Eliot's poetry that have explained without illuminating. Miss Gardner, mercifully, does not assume the part of a Delphic oracle, she does not set out to unriddle the Sphinx. The weakness of the riddle-readers is that they limit a poem; by tying down an obscure phrase or image to one meaning, they rob it of those ambiguities, which, as Miss Gardner reminds us, "it is not the critic's business to remove"; the poetry may lie in the tension between two conceivable meanings. So instead of fussing over the possible originals of the "dying nurse" or the "ruined millionaire" of the lyric in *East Coker*, Miss Gardner suggests that we might more profitably re-read the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah.

Alert, prepared, intelligent yet humble, content to let the meaning of a passage emerge in its own good time, Miss Gardner shows herself to be the reader that every poet would like to have, that every other reader should aspire to be. Mr. Eliot himself (like Henry James) has assigned an active role to the reader. "The reader's interpretation may differ from the author's and be equally valid—it may even be better. There may be much more in a poem than the author was aware of." But what the reader finds in a poem will depend very much on what he brings to it. As

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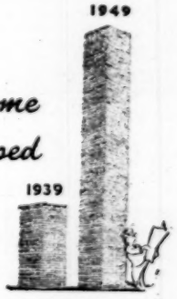

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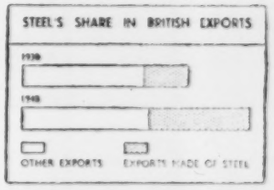

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well as her sympathy, sensitiveness and intelligence Miss Gardner brings to her reading a sense of poetry as a continuous and living process. She has not tried to impose a view, a system; she is not concerned to place, or judge. Her characteristic quality is a kind of transparency. At the end of her commentary we are conscious, not so much of what Miss Gardner says as of what the poems are; we have been looking *through* it to the poems; not reading Gardner on Eliot, but reading Eliot afresh, with a deeper understanding, a sharper sensibility. JANET ADAM SMITH

The Education of the Poetic Spirit. By MARJORIE L. HOURD. *Heinemann.* 10s. 6d.

Miss Hourd's book is a very clear exposition of an empathetic method of teaching that seems to have achieved a workable synthesis of the academic authoritarian and the "freedom" schools. The arrangement of an atmosphere of "*wu wei*" (of creative permission) by the teacher elicits that combination of emotional freedom and artistic control in expression from the pupil which Miss Hourd believes to be ideal. Her bias, like that of Dr. Susan Issacs and Martin Buber, with whom she is essentially in agreement, is towards the development and increase of imagination in her pupils, and her method must properly be called a therapy directed against modern society; almost an inoculation with the serum of the poetic spirit. Examples of her pupils work justify an endeavour that is predominantly aesthetic; in her organised flight to the centre of poetic inspiration she, too, curiously denies that centre a social historical periphery; forgetting that this denies it a centre.

Week-end Competitions

No. 1,025

Set by J. B. Rodelic

The usual prizes are offered for an extract, not exceeding 150 words, from any book of prose or poetry which competitors would like to have seen in our Selected Autumn List, but which unfortunately has not yet been written; *e.g.*, a new novel by E. M. Forster, a new detective story by Dorothy Sayers, or a new collection of short stories by Aldous Huxley. Entries by October 18th.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 1,022

Set by Norman MacKenzie

Assuming a football pool canvasser spoke Shakespearean verse, compose ten lines he might address to a prospective client.

Report by Norman MacKenzie

A large entry, which yielded its expected crop of "Is this a sucker which I see before me?" and "To bet or not to bet . . ." Competitors were divided pretty clearly into two groups. To the first, the canvasser was a Shakesperean *character*, one such as patters through a scene before the curtain while the set is moved and the other actors do a quick change. To the second, he was a *canvasser* who by some strange aberration spoke in decorated iambics. Both were legitimate types of answer, though the first seems to have been a more fruitful approach. A number of entries had one flashing phrase or well-coined metaphors. I liked Jabberwock's:

Think, to this pool thou dost that one drop add
Which breaks the bank, unstopping his increase.

and Francis Drake's:

. . . shall in thy coffers
Put uncripp'd thousands, which shall plead against
The deep damnation of his raking-off.

while J. H. Wilson ended with a rousing

. . . honest fools
Cry "Cripps" for conscience, and for fortune "Pools."

I am sorry the one entry from a genuine canvasser was competent rather than prize-winning. Perhaps she may care to recite to her prospective clients the lines which earn two guineas for T. T. Ormandy, and one guinea each for J. P. Mullarky, Pithecus, Leslie Johnson and M.E.N.

This Crewe playing that, this that, each below each,
Divided thus and thus,—North Ende, South Ende—
Which winnes, which drawes, which loses, thou shalt chuse.

Bank thou on some, and permutate the rest.
So, Wolves may drawe the wolf back from thy door,
And Portsmouth winne thine argosie to port.
Let not "afraid not" wait upon "I would'"
For Treble Chance, if Fortune's Spurs have Points,
Leeds thee to multitudinous dividends,
To Stirling, Villa, Hearts, and troops of friends.

T. T. ORMANDY

Prefabricated is thy dwelling place:
But need thy life prefabricated be?
Patterned upon thy poor progenitors,
Penned in the petty path of poverty?
Seek not the brief escape in watered beer,
The greyhounds' lure, the filmic anodyne;
Where Mersey's mild, unlimpid waters flow,
Full fortune with a treble chance is thine.
Seek in her pools the perfect Welfare State;
Rise! Rise, Ye timid poor and permutate!

J. P. MULLARKY

Lads and lasses, join my pool,
Here is wealth for sage and fool;
Magic X and two and one
Bring you riches by the ton.
All my pools are money-spinners,
See the wondrous list of winners;
Let your lines be few or many
At a shilling or a penny.
Each will fall on fruitful ground
And flower with fifty thousand pound.

PITHECUS

Good sir, be not mispriz'd upon my errand;
I would bespeak you as congenerous
With our fraternity. Mark well this schedule.
You do, sir? Nay, your pardon; 'tis as yet
Unmark'd, but mark you, being mark'd aright,
With due engagement to despatch your stake
A sennight hence, 'twill fetch you argosies,
And that sans parle or quillet. Stay, good sir,
Set your charactery upon these dots
And you shall prove my words veridical.

LESLIE JOHNSON

Permit me madam—nay one inch I beg—
I am no vagabond with vacuum tale,
But Fortune's envoy knocking at your door.

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